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ABSTRACT

This report analyzes the difficulties encountered in the transformation of education in the Czech Republic and identifies change in policies and structures that could stimulate further reform in the needed directions. The book contains two parts with 15 chapters. Part 1 describes the development of education since the political change as rapid and responsive in some areas and less substantial and constrained in others. Part 1 chapters include: (1) "Educational Reform in the Context of Transition"; (2) "Human Resources, Socio-economic and Political Developments"; (3) "Institutional Structure and Curriculum Changes: Quantitative and Qualitative Developments"; (4) "Working Conditions and Training of Teachers"; (5) "Governance, Administration and Evaluation of the Education System"; (6) "New Approaches to Educational Financing"; and (7) "Conclusions and Key Issues." Part 2 is the Examiners' Report which addresses the new expectations for Czech education and training and contains the 11 recommendations for new policies and structures which could promote and support needed change. Part 2 chapters include: (1) "Human Resources Development in a Transition Economy"; (2) "Structuring the Education System for Equity"; (3) "Curriculum Development in General Education"; (4) "Student Progression and Assessment"; (5) "Reinforcing Quality in the Teaching Force"; (6) "Effective Administration and Quality Assurance"; (7) "Vocational and Technical Education and Training"; and (8) "Recommendations." (EH)

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REVIEWS OF NATIONAL POLICIES FOR EDUCATION

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CZECH REPUBLIC

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REVIEWS OF NATIONAL POLICIES FOR EDUCATION

CZECH REPUBLIC

ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT

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FOREWORD

Among the economies in transition, the Czech Republic is looked to as a "success story". Since the political change in 1989, its economy has shown steady improvement during a period of substantial structural change, shifts in exports and export markets, and privatisation. Levels of unemployment and inflation have been surprisingly low, and the budget is in balance. Stability in the society continues to be a strength, built on newly-implemented democratic structures and processes and a lively political debate.

But, further transformation of the economy and society is likely to depend, to a greater extent than in the past, on the knowledge, dispositions and skills of its population. This calls for a more strategic approach for Czech education policy in which broad human resource development, responsive to the evolving needs of the economy and society as well as the interests and aspirations of young people and adults, is promoted and supported.

As described and analysed by a Czech research team in Part One of this report, the development of education since the political change has been rapid and responsive in some areas but less substantial and even constrained in others. In Part Two, taking the analysis of the problems as the starting point, the OECD examiners address the new expectations for Czech education and training and make eleven recommendations for new policies and structures which could promote and support needed change. Particular attention is given to quality and equity in education, priorities in the development of vocational and technical education, a revitalised role for teachers, and new structures for improved efficiency and strengthened democracy in schools and schooling.

Both parts of the reports, and particularly the examiners' recommendations, were discussed at a special meeting of the OECD's Education Committee, convened in Prague on 14-15 March, 1996.

The OECD examiners were: Jean-Pierre Jallade (France); Peter Grootings and Denis Kallen (Netherlands); Gabor Halasz (Hungary); and Alan Wagner (Secretariat).

This volume is published on the responsibility of the Secretary-General of the OECD.

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Part One

TRANSFORMING EDUCATION

Summary of the Background Report prepared by the Czech authorities

INTRODUCTION

This shortened version of the Background Report of the review of education in the Czech Republic was used by representatives of OECD Member countries to launch the discussion on the state of Czech education at an international conference organised by the OECD and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, in Prague, 14 to 15 March, 1996. It is also aimed at the wider Czech public and the media as a government-sponsored, but independent, view on the situation and key issues of Czech education system. The full version of the Background Report, similar in content but more detailed, was written for the OECD examiners as a basis, together with the findings of their visit to the Czech Republic (which took place from 20 September to 4 October 1995), for their own report and recommendations.

The Background Report and its shortened version have been prepared with the support of the European Union PHARE/RES programme by the Education Policy Centre of the Faculty of Education of Charles University, designated by the Ministry of Education as responsible for its co-ordination and completion. The actual work on the text was conducted by a small team composed of L. Čerych (team leader), F. Bacík, J. Kotásek and J. Švecová.

Close to 20 Czech specialists have contributed to this work, either through preparing entire chapters or sub-sections, or through supplying the main data and information upon which the report is based. They included, in particular, the following:

Z. Cermáková, M. Černá, J. Hendrichová, D. Holda, Z. Charouzek, J. Kalous, J. Kaštánková, O. Kofronová, P. Mateju, J. Nováčková, P. Roupec, M. Rosenzweig, K. Rýdl, L. Svoboda, J. Vecerník, J. Vojtech, J. Volf, E. Walterová, P. Zeleny.

Although their contribution was essential to this report, none of them should be considered as responsible for the opinions expressed therein. The same is true of the Ministry of Education, which sponsored the preparation of the report and on behalf of which it was submitted to the OECD. This fact does not imply agreement, on the part of the Ministry of Education, with every finding and conclusion of the Background Report. The latter should be considered as an analysis by an independent group of experts appointed by the Ministry of Education and not necessarily as a document reflecting the current views and standpoints of the ministry. It should be noted, however, that the report takes into account most of the comments received on earlier versions from officials of the Ministry of Education, the different Czech contributors and specialists, as well as the OECD examiners.

While the content and main findings of this shortened version of the Background Report are identical to those of the full version, its structure is slightly different. Instead of three main parts and 14 chapters, it is divided into seven chapters, and either leaves out some of the less important themes or incorporates them into those which were maintained. Chapter 1 is of a more general nature and defines the main characteristics and factors of the education reform process in the Czech Republic. Chapter 2 describes the links between the development of education, the overall transformation process and government policies concerning human resources development. Chapters 3 to 6 consider the main changes of the education system (in the areas of institutional structures and curriculum, teachers' status and training, management and financing) and Chapter 7 presents some key issues remaining open and questions requiring an answer. Obviously, reducing the Background Report required omitting a certain number of details and simplifying the analysis and arguments presented. For this reason, the full version of the Background Report is available to those interested in a broader picture of the Czech education system.

The Background Report in its version submitted to the OECD-Czech Ministry of Education Conference of 14-15 March, 1996, held in Prague, was completed 30 November, 1995. The present version was updated following this conference and takes into consideration the latest available statistical data as well as the important developments which have taken place during the first six months of 1996.

Thanks must be extended to all those who have participated in the preparation of this report, including those who have commented on its earlier drafts, as well as to Ms. M. Fedyná̊ková, Ms. J. Nedvedová and Mr. J. Svoboda, for their technical and secretarial help towards its completion and presentation, and to Mrs. J. Eady, who has assumed the translation from Czech into English and the final English editing.

On behalf of the Education Policy Centre,

Ladislav Čerych
Director
Prague, 30 June 1996

Chapter 1

EDUCATION REFORM IN THE CONTEXT OF TRANSITION*

There can be no doubt that the main aspects of the overall transformation process in the Czech Republic have their counterpart in the changes undergone since 1989 by the country's education and training systems. The four key features and principles of these changes respond clearly to the general aims of the overall transformation process:

- the de-politicisation of education and training (now virtually completed), *i.e.* the end of tight ideological control, is obviously a direct consequence of the end of the single-party system which previously governed the country in all sectors and used education as a tool to manipulate the younger generation;
- the recognition of the right of pupils (or their parents) to choose their educational path according to their abilities and interests – and to select as a result the school appropriate for this choice – is an integral part of the overall liberalisation process;
- the breaking-down of the state monopoly in education by allowing private and denominational schools to be established can be considered, among other things, as an important aspect of a return to market economy and pluralistic democracy, the two most important goals of the general transition process. The de-monopolisation of education has, at the same time, contributed significantly to a quantitative increase and qualitative diversification of education opportunities, as well as to the emergence of a competitive environment in education;
- decentralisation in the management of the education system, achieved so far mainly by delegating to municipalities, schools, and their directors, a number of decision-making powers, can also be viewed as part of the general liberalisation process as well as an application of the principle of subsidiarity, essential in a modern pluralistic democracy.

One of the key means toward implementing the above principles was the introduction of formula funding to replace incremental funding of education, which motivates schools to respond flexibly to educational demand, creating preconditions for a new quality of relationship between the state, education institutions and citizens.

* In this report, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport is referred to as Ministry of Education.

In short, all the main modifications to the education and training systems are clearly linked to the broader goals of the overall transition process, and its *de facto* consequences. The education reform process as such is characterised by three features, unusual and rare in more or less normal circumstances.

Firstly, the breadth, range, and depth of the education reforms proposed or already adopted is extraordinarily large. They concern almost all levels and sectors of education, the structure of the system as a whole, curricula, educational legislation, management, the administration and financing of the system and of its schools, the creation of institutions (schools, universities) of a completely new type not corresponding to any past national tradition, etc.

Secondly, the speed of the reform process is also quite exceptional. Contrary to the general experience that educational change and reform, even in their formulation stage, almost always require a relatively long time, often several years, education reforms in the Czech Republic were designed, adopted and launched, especially during the first two years of the transition period, in a matter of months or in not more than a year.

Thirdly, the education reform process has been, particularly between 1989 to 1994, mainly spontaneous and the result of a bottom-up process. Educational change, to the extent it is taking place, is due to individual and local initiatives, less and sometimes very little, to government steering (except in the area of the new methods of financing education). The government has of course created, principally by new legislation (authorising private schools, allowing free choice of schools, etc.), the main conditions for this to happen but it did not, or to a very limited extent only, have any control over the entire process, nor did it set any specific goals for it.

These three aspects of the education reform process in Central and Eastern European countries (CEECs) – global scope, speed and spontaneity – obviously have important implications for the implementation of the proposed and adopted reforms, and for the relative weight and interplay of different factors either facilitating or hindering the reform process.

At least eleven such factors, more or less specific to the Czech transition context (although certainly present also in other CEECs) can be identified:

- the heritage of the communist regime;
- the role of pre-war models and traditions;
- the role of supporters and opponents (actors);
- the development of the legislative framework;
- labour market requirements;
- the influence of political beliefs and doctrines;
- the importance attached by the government to education in relation to other transition goals;
- salaries of education personnel in relation to salaries in other sectors;
- the role of private schools;
- the role of foreign models and advisers;
- the role of public opinion and the media.

The heritage of the communist regime

In a sense, this factor can be considered as the most important one in explaining the difficulties of reforms in the Czech Republic, as well as in other CEECs. A wide range of aspects of this heritage can be identified, most of them of a sociological nature and falling under the heading of inertia of acquired attitudes and behaviour patterns. More specifically can be mentioned work habits current in the old system, the deeply rooted practice of acting only according to detailed instructions "from above", outdated teaching methods and contents, and the like.

No data and no survey exist to enable researchers to evaluate the percentage of schools, teachers, parents, etc., who have changed their attitudes and behaviour, or that of those who have not. In general, it is estimated that the former – the innovating sector – are only a small minority, perhaps 15 to 20 per cent, which would mean that in 80 to 85 per cent of cases linked to some of the essential aspects of educational developments such as curriculum or teaching methods, the system has not yet really changed.

On the other hand, it has to be recognised that sociological forces and resistance such as those linked to this heritage factor require, almost by definition, a long time to be attenuated and that they can lose their impact only very gradually. Even if the figures of 15 to 20 per cent as an assessment of the size of the innovative minority are correct (or are, possibly, lower still), this might not be viewed as a bad performance in a more historical perspective, especially considering that only six years have elapsed since the breakdown of a totalitarian regime which lasted for almost two generations.

The role of pre-war models and traditions

Education, in the Czech Republic – the country of Comenius – as anywhere else, is probably more than any other social sector or subsystem, deeply rooted in national history and traditions. These traditions were radically abandoned following the communist takeover and a new foreign model imposed. A certain return to the pre-communist and particularly pre-war situation was to some extent an inevitable and normal development. In that sense, it could even be said that a restoration, rather than a revolution, has accompanied the end of the communist regime.

In the case of Czech education, this restoration presents a two-fold problem. On the one hand, it has occasionally led to a rejection of any external influences, however appropriate or profitable they might be, and thus to an opposition to reforms deemed, rightly or wrongly, to be externally inspired. On the other hand, a strong emphasis on national traditions often means disregard or even rejection of trends and developments which education systems of advanced democratic countries have been necessarily undergoing since the war: the search for equality of opportunity, different forms of diversification, closer functional links between education and society, postponing the differentiation between general and vocational education, etc.

However, it has to be recognised that some reforms inspired by the pre-war system had a significant effect, although they are open to criticism. This is the case, for example, of curriculum models introduced in the first and second cycles of numerous basic schools.

The role of supporters and opponents (actors)

Several categories of actors who influence the reform process can be distinguished, *e.g.* teachers and school directors, pupils and their parents, officials of the school administration at all levels, elected policy makers, the Parliament and political parties, employers, expert groups.

Teachers and school directors are probably the most important among these categories. It is thanks to them that numerous changes have been introduced into Czech schools; they are the root of the bottom-up reform process, although, of course, they can also represent an important factor of resistance to change.

The role of parents was virtually non-existent under the communist regime and has been certainly on the increase since 1990, especially in private schools, although parent associations in the Czech Republic are not yet as powerful as in many Western countries. Sometimes, the limited involvement of parents in the development of schools is due not only to the passive attitudes inherited from the past, but simply to their lack of awareness and experience in matters concerning their participation in the functioning of schools.

Overall, it can probably be said that educational issues have so far not been a priority item on the agenda of Czech political parties. This does not mean that they resisted reforms, simply that they were not their real initiators. Moreover, in the election programmes of both coalition and opposition parties, educational issues occupied a relatively small place and were treated in only very general terms. These programmes seldom, if ever, included concrete proposals for reform.

As far as Parliament is concerned, its role was and remains obviously crucial, considering especially the utmost importance of educational legislation. In a sense, virtually every major reform had to be, and was approved, albeit not initiated, by Parliament.

The role of the central school administration, which has been almost completely renewed, was of key importance, but it is impossible to make any generalisation in this respect. If many ministerial officials were initiators of reforms, others were undoubtedly sticking to old pattern and habits. Instability in the ministry staff, including four different Ministers of Education (between 1990 and 1994) may also have been a certain negative factor.

An important, often very positive role was, and still is played by the newly created School Offices in districts. Although, formally, they are mere instruments of the central authority, they and their officials frequently had a key influence on innovative development at the local and school levels. On the contrary, municipalities and their education officers, since they have by law small competencies in education, had, overall, a rather

limited impact on education reform, although, in some cases, they have significantly contributed to the development of basic schools and kindergartens in their localities.

As far as employers are concerned, their impact on education has so far generally been rather restricted and is, in fact, smaller compared to the past. This points towards a certain disconnection between the education and economic sectors.

The development of the legislative framework

The Czech Republic is very legalistic, similarly to Austria and to some other CEECs and in total contrast to the Anglo-Saxon tradition. In a sense, only what exists through law, or is backed by law, can exist at all, hence the crucial importance of the legislative framework for almost any important education reform. At the same time, any lags or gaps in legislation often make reforms and change impossible.

An important consideration to be stressed in this context concerns the gradual slowing down of law preparation and adoption. As already mentioned, the process was very fast in the first years after 1989. However, the situation has changed in the past year or two. New education laws have increasingly become the subject of controversy and are more difficult to pass.

The other major legislation problem which affects the development of education and training in the Czech Republic is the absence of legislation in certain areas which are not directly concerned with education and training but still highly relevant to them. This applies in particular to the lack of legislation (until the middle of 1995) on non-profit organisations, or on the final arrangements regarding the territorial and administrative division of the country. These are all matters of great importance for the development and decentralisation of education. Even more important, however, is the nature of existing legislation concerning the fiscal system, which has so far no special provisions favouring human resources development. This does not mean that it prevents or blocks reforms – but it certainly does not provide adequate incentives to accelerate or facilitate them.

Labour market requirements

In general, the labour market certainly had a great influence upon education reform, but it was essentially indirect and mediated mainly by the population's perception of its present and future needs, rather than by any structured comprehensive survey, method or forecasting. Any method which would recall old manpower planning is rejected in the Czech context and the responses to labour market needs are almost entirely spontaneous and uncoordinated. This can of course lead to excesses and imbalances in the growth of different education and training fields (e.g. the over-emphasis on the development of rather specialised secondary technical schools).

Overall, however, it can probably be said that the education and training system has responded to the main changes in labour market requirements. The adaptability of the

Czech labour force and the flexibility of the labour market itself are presumably the main favourable factors in this respect.

Influence of political beliefs and doctrines

As already mentioned, all the main features of the transformation of education in the Czech Republic correspond to the general principles of the country's liberalisation: return to democracy and market economy, development of a pluralistic system, deregulation, decentralisation, etc. Among these principles, the concept of market economy plays a key role and as such influences decisively the development of education. Certain reforms cannot be launched at all or are very difficult to implement if they are perceived, rightly or wrongly, as contrary to this concept – for example, a reform proposing a new co-ordinating role of the state in education.

The importance attached by the government to education in relation to other transformation goals, and salaries of educational personnel in relation to salaries in other sectors will be considered in Chapter 2.

The role of private schools

The opening of the education system to private schools was certainly related to the expectation that they will also represent an innovative sector by introducing new curricula, new subjects, new teaching methods and the like, and help to spread these innovations in the system as a whole. No systematic survey on this point exists, but the general feeling prevails that private schools are meeting this expectation (which partly explains their attractiveness). Of course, not all of them do and some might probably be criticised, especially among the private secondary technical schools (which are by far the most numerous), for merely following certain fashions (*e.g.* concentrating on management and business education) rather than assuming a truly innovative role.

Overall, however, and in expectation of the results of further investigations on this subject, private schools can be considered as an important factor of educational change in the Czech Republic.

The role of foreign models and advisers

Immediately after 1989, the Czech Republic in common with virtually all CEECs, was inundated with foreign advisers, teams of experts from different international organisations, representatives of foundations, numerous Western universities and the like. There can be no doubt that, directly or indirectly, implicitly or explicitly, their influence and outside models in general played an important role in the launching of education reforms in the Czech Republic. The German *Fachhochschule*, the Dutch HBO or the OECD concept of "short-cycle" or "non-university sector" of higher education, the

recent Australian methods of education financing, the American degree structure and many other features of Western development have certainly inspired reforms in Czech education. This does not mean that many of the external recommendations have not been put aside and ignored and that, in some cases, and especially at a later period, a certain resistance or even rejection of foreign models and advisers did not take place. Overall, however, such maxims as "return to Europe" or "catching-up" did certainly reflect a key force influencing the reform process, significantly helped by several large assistance programmes, and especially the European Union's PHARE and TEMPUS schemes.

An interesting question is whether certain international organisations, and which of them, have been and are particularly successful in transmitting and helping to introduce new concepts, visions or strategies. It seems that, in the Czech Republic, this is almost certainly the case of the OECD. Its 1992 *Review on Higher Education in the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic* definitely had a great impact on the development of Czech higher education. Since that time, the Czech Republic has participated actively in other OECD activities. Its reports are widely read and influence sighificantly Czech thinking about future orientations of education. The role of the OECD cannot but increase, as the country has become, at the end of 1995, a full member of this organisation.

The role of public opinion and media

According to annual opinion polls of the Public Opinion Research Institute, education is not placed high on the list of problems considered very urgent by citizens. In a list of 16 areas of possible priority interest, in 1994 it occupied 11th place, and in 1995, 12th place. Problems such as crime, corruption, social security, health care, the environment and economic reforms preceded it on the scale.

Consequently, it can be assumed that a connection exists between the relatively low level of interest of society in issues pertaining to education and the relatively low level of interest of political parties in this area.

A close relationship certainly exists between the interest of the public in schooling and education and the attention which is devoted to it in the press and other media. Here again, the situation in the Czech Republic is not very favourable. There is nothing in the Czech Republic which could be compared with the British *Times Education Supplement* or the French *Le Monde de l'Education*. Dailies devote to education only short and feature articles reacting mainly to "hot events" (*e.g.* strike threats on the part of teachers, discussion of a new law, etc.), rarely longer and more fundamental analytical articles. None of the newspapers has a regular (weekly or monthly) column devoted to problems of education, whereas economic, financial and cultural (arts, theatre, films and literature) life are almost daily the subject of special pages or even entire sections.

In concluding this chapter, it is necessary to point out that in the Czech Republic, as anywhere else, none of the factors analysed in this discussion, nor any other which could be added, can by itself explain the success or failure of particular reforms. Some factors can be more important than others, some have an indirect or even marginal influence, while others may play a decisive role. In all cases, however, the reform process – and

inversely its absence or distortion – is the result of complex interactions between various factors. A multiplicity of factors and actors are practically always at work, and only an analysis of their mutual connections can provide a solid basis to elucidate the reform process and formulate adequate policy.

Chapter 2

HUMAN RESOURCES, SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

The main, mostly highly positive aspects of the economic development and situation of the Czech Republic are well known. Among the particularly favourable macro-economic indicators, the following five are usually quoted: relatively low inflation rate (9 to 10 per cent) compared to other CEECs; very low unemployment (less than 3 per cent at the end of 1995); a balanced budget; a low level of debt; an almost full convertibility of the currency since the fall of 1995. On the negative side are, among others, the still incomplete restructuring and privatisation of industry (especially that of large companies) and a declining, until 1993, and still low GDP (a reversal of the trend was recorded in 1994 and, to an even greater extent, in 1995).

What role or place did human resource development (HRD) play in the generally favourable results of the transition process? The question can be split into two more concrete parts:

- to what extent were the macro-economic developments of the past five to six years accompanied by conditions favouring, and resulting in, a new and improved environment for HRD and, especially, in a new perception and attitude of the Czech population with regard to the value of education?
- to what extent did government policies as a whole consider and do continue to consider HRD as a strategic tool and objective of the overall transitions?

General conditions and factors of human resource development

To answer the first of these two questions, it should be recalled, as mentioned at the beginning of the first chapter that the main modifications of the education and training system in the Czech Republic were clearly linked to the overall transformation process and were its *de facto* consequences. In more specific terms, two problem areas have to be considered: changes in returns to human capital and the impact of the labour market on HRD.

Changing returns to human capital

Under the communist regime returns to human capital were particularly low. Differences in earnings between manual and non-manual labour and, more generally, between persons with higher and lower levels of education were small or non-existent. On the contrary, manual labour was often rewarded more than non-manual occupations and earning differences between the two categories did not cover, or only barely, the costs of studies or the income forgone during schooling. In other words, variance in earnings was not, contrary to the theory of human capital, a function of the variability in education.

The situation has been changing since 1990, slowly in some sectors and more quickly in others, especially in the rapidly developing private sector, which, in 1995, represented almost two-thirds of the employed population. Tables 2.1 and 2.2 are indicative of the new situation, *i.e.* of a growing return to human capital.

Table 2.1. **Salary differentiation according to ownership sector and education level reached, 1993**

Per cent difference in comparison with average salaries of people with basic school education

	Ownership sector				
	Total	State	Former State privatised	Private	Foreign
Vocational	5.7	2.0	13.1	2.5	12.4
Full secondary	20.9	7.3	32.0	9.6	34.9
University	..	45.5	51.0	49.1	77.4

Source: Institute of Sociology, 1995.

Table 2.2. **Average monthly salaries by sector**

In CZK

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	Index 1990/95
Agriculture	3 603	3 706	4 264	5 100	5 840	7 065	196
Industry	3 410	3 972	4 805	5 863	6 896	8 219	241
Banking	3 351	5 192	7 877	10 336	12 525	14 319	427
Construction	3 612	4 041	5 024	6 529	7 635	8 972	247
Public administration	3 299	3 994	5 324	6 850	8 320	10 179	308
Education	2 894	3 423	4 296	5 249	6 325	8 017	277
Health	3 043	3 663	4 387	5 525	6 476	7 014	230
National average	3 286	3 792	4 644	5 816	6 896	8 438	257

Source: Czech Statistical Office.

Clearly, the higher the level of education, the more important are the salary differences, a trend particularly apparent in privatised and private firms and in those with foreign participation.

Table 2.2 shows, for example, that the banking sector, which recruits people with relatively high education qualifications, records the most rapid salary increases, while agriculture, in which education qualifications are on average relatively low, lags well behind in this respect. At the same time, it has to be recognised that traditional branches of highly qualified and intellectual professions such as education or health services have so far witnessed relatively low salary increases, due mainly to the fact that they are, to a large extent, part of the public sector.

The increasing income differentials have been accompanied by what seems one of the most important features of educational development in the Czech Republic: the rapid increase in student numbers at secondary and higher education levels, in spite of the sharp demographic decline (Table 2.3).

The more than 42 per cent increase in new entrants into secondary technical schools (corresponding to the age group with the sharpest demographic decline), and over 64 per cent of new entrants into higher education are particularly significant in this respect.

It cannot be assumed that this growth is due only or principally to the growing income differentials for people with higher education levels; it must result also from a changing perception of the value of education in society. Indicators pointing in this direction are several outcomes of public opinion research. Thus, for example, 90 per cent of respondents in a 1995 survey considered learning in adulthood as important. According to another survey, education is increasingly seen as a means towards social advancement (in the past, political connections were perceived as the key factor in this respect), while yet another shows that private annual expenditure on education has reached significant levels.

Table 2.3. **New entrants to secondary schools and higher education**

	1989/90	1990/91	1991/92	1992/93	1993/94	1994/95	1995/96
Secondary schools total	174 410	168 808	153 402	172 830	177 607	171 603	154 696
index	100	96.79	87.96	99.09	101.83	98.39	88.7
of which:							
Gymnasia	26 267	33 347	25 995	29 578	29 655	30 366	26 769
index	100	126.95	98.96	112.61	112.90	115.61	101.91
Secondary technical schools	42 071	42 806	45 450	49 335	54 932	61 296	60 003
index	100	101.75	108.03	117.27	130.57	145.70	142.6
Secondary vocational schools	106 072	92 655	81 957	93 917	93 020	79 941	67 924
index	100	87.35	77.27	88.54	87.70	75.36	64.0
Higher education	22 846	24 499	22 572	28 101	30 350	33 444	37 573
index	100	107.24	98.80	123.00	132.85	146.39	164.4

Source: Institute for Information in Education (corresponding years).

This last point is closely connected with very tangible evidence of the growing value of education in the perception and attitudes of society, namely the extremely rapid growth of private (non-state) schools and of the willingness of parents to pay fees charged by them. Starting from none in 1989, the number of non-state schools (private and denominational) grew to 735 in 1995-96 (including pre-primary schools), with over 91 000 pupils. Among these, secondary technical and vocational schools represent the largest segment, with over 17 per cent of total enrolment at this level.

No comprehensive data on the fees of private schools exists, but it can be estimated that on average they range from CZK 6 000 to 20 000 per year, which corresponds to approximately one to three months of the current national monthly salary average. In some cases, the annual fees amount to CZK 40 000 or even more.

The rapid development of non-state, fee-paying, schools is particularly significant when considering that, on the one hand, the country's constitution guarantees to every citizen free basic and secondary education and, on the other, there is no tradition of paying for compulsory and secondary education. During the 42 years of the communist regime, education was totally free, and even before 1939, fees for secondary education were very low, and paid only by a small minority of the population.

If, in spite of these facts, growing numbers of parents are willing to send their children to private, fee-paying schools, this, it can be argued, represents clear evidence that investment in education is considered by a significant proportion of society as justified and desirable. On the whole, it can also be assumed that parents' interest in non-state schools is an expression of their interest in a higher quality of education and of their belief that in this respect private schools are better than state schools.

As mentioned in Chapter 5, the results of the latest research do not confirm this assumption, but the opinion certainly prevails that non-state schools are more open to modernisation of the educational process (in methods and content of study, and especially, in the whole-school atmosphere) than state schools. Other factors and motivations naturally play a role and contribute to the growth of private schools, such as, for example, an insufficient capacity of state schools in certain fields or the hope of "easier" examinations in some private schools.

Finally, the problem of continuing education should be mentioned. In spite of great shortcomings (see below), during recent years the number of institutions offering various kinds of courses has risen very substantially and so has the demand for these courses, mainly on the part of individuals and in spite of the lack of any systematic incentive in this respect. The spontaneity of this demand and its bottom-up nature is, it can be argued, a good indication of a growing trend towards professional and social mobility, as is the readiness of parents to pay fees in private schools, and the population's willingness to invest in education. They all show that society at large perceives education increasingly as a key factor of individual and social development.

Human resource development and the labour market

The development of the labour market over the past six years has greatly contributed to the population's increasing demand for education as well as the rapidly growing

supply of education and training opportunities stimulated by the de-monopolisation of the system. This factor was reinforced by the transition from a highly selective and restrictive (politically and otherwise) education system (in both general and technical secondary education as well as in higher education) to an open one responding, among other things, to an accumulated and unsatisfied demand from before 1989.

As already mentioned, some of the most rapidly growing sectors (*e.g.* banking and insurance, health and welfare, trade and catering) are those involving a higher level of education. The three areas where educational demand and supply have grown most rapidly and significantly, namely business, computer science and foreign languages, are those which the labour market particularly values (or those perceived as being of key importance for the future).

One of the key characteristics of the Czech labour market is the very low rate of unemployment. In this respect, the country is in a practically unique situation compared both to Western Europe and to other CEECs. The rate of unemployment for the Republic as a whole developed as follows (the figures concern the end of each year):

1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
4.4%	2.6%	3.5%	3.2%	2.9%

Source: Czech Statistical Office.

Regional and social inequalities, of course, exist with a maximum of over 6 per cent in north-east Moravia, and of over 10 per cent for persons with only basic education or less. In contrast, Prague has at present no more than 0.3 per cent unemployed.

As could be expected, and is current in most developed countries, the highest ratios concern mainly those least qualified in terms of education, whereas people with full secondary education and higher degrees mostly have ratios below the national average (except for graduates of general secondary education, whose ratio is slightly above the national average) (Table 2.4). Thus, more education becomes also in the Czech Republic a means of preventing, or lessening the danger of unemployment. This represents a new

Table 2.4. **Unemployment ratios corresponding to different educational levels attained**

End of 1995

Unemployed with only basic education or less	10.4%
Unemployed with vocational qualifications but without complete secondary education	3.4%
Unemployed with complete technical secondary education	1.7%
Unemployed with complete general secondary education	2.4%
Unemployed with a higher education degree	0.5%

Source: Czech Statistical Office, 1995.

economic motivation for the development of education (even if the present levels of unemployment are very low).

There are many explanations for the low unemployment in the Czech Republic. Clearly, the flexibility of the labour market can be considered as the most important single general factor in this connection. There are also other factors, several of which explain this flexibility:

- the high absorption capacity of the new private sector;
- the absence of major social tensions;
- the still insufficient or incomplete restructuring (and *de facto* also full privatisation) of part of industry and the pre-transformation and pre-privatisation behaviour of many large enterprises ("labour hoarding");
- the absence of any significant technological unemployment;
- a comparatively large decline in the size of the active population; between 1989 and 1993 this decline amounted to approximately 12 per cent (from 5 443 000 to 4 776 000 persons);
- the relatively high professional qualifications of the labour force and its skills and adaptiveness, representing a certain continuity from the pre-war period and probably also "adaptation lessons" taken from the communist regime.

The influence of low unemployment on HRD is a matter of speculation. On the one hand, it can be argued that this particular factor represents, at least in some cases, a disincentive towards readiness to embark upon further education or retraining. In a situation of almost full employment, the necessary investment in education might indeed appear superfluous to many. On the other hand, the restructuring of the economy, implying the development of new branches and types of activity, and the opening of the country to the outside world almost by definition call for the acquisition of new skills and knowledge, especially those required by a rapidly developing private sector.

On balance, it can therefore be assumed that low unemployment, combined with other factors, especially with the flexibility of the labour market, has so far had a positive impact on the willingness and propensity of Czech society to invest in education and training.

This then provides an overall positive answer to the first of the two questions put at the outset of this chapter: the general transition process in the Czech Republic is indisputably accompanied by, and interrelated with, a transformation of the education and training system. Two interconnected factors played a key role in this respect:

- The general opening and liberalisation of the system had a counterpart also in the opening and liberalisation of education and training accompanied by appropriate legislative measures (authorising private schools, free choice of schools by pupils or parents, school autonomy, etc.).
- Another powerful impetus to the transformation of the education and training system was the almost spontaneous development of the population's attitudes, perceptions and behaviour concerning the value of education and training.

However, it is obvious that this process is far from complete. Whether its completion can and should rely essentially on spontaneous developments, which would unavoidably imply a long period, or whether an acceleration and (or) better balancing of this process can and should be brought about by adequate governmental policies, is the subject of the next section.

Human resource development and government policies

The second question put at the outset of the present chapter can also be formulated as follows: to what extent is HRD a priority for the government, and where does it rank on its political agenda?

An initial partial and indirect indication in this respect are statistics of public expenditure on education and training as a percentage of the GDP and of total public expenditure. In summary, public expenditure on education and training grew from 4 per cent of the GDP in 1989 to 5.9 per cent in 1994 with a rapid increase mainly between 1989 and 1993.

As far as the proportion of the total of public expenditure is concerned, the Czech record seems particularly favourable. Among some 30 countries surveyed by the OECD, the Czech Republic was placed third, with a proportion of public spending on education of 15.3 per cent (1992), preceded only by Hungary (18.7 per cent) and Switzerland (16.5 per cent). This share has remained more or less constant since 1990.

It should not be forgotten, however, that the GDP in the Czech Republic remains relatively low and that it has declined by more than 23 per cent between 1989 and 1993. This means that close to 50 per cent of the growth in the GDP share of public education expenditure has been absorbed by the reduction in GDP.

A reversal of the trend can be observed in 1994 and further growth of GDP is expected in 1995 and in future years. Thus, at least from the point of view of general budget allocation, HRD is relatively well placed. Whether this implies that the needs of desirable HRD are adequately met and whether HRD assumes in the views and policies of the government a strategic role is another matter.

Rather strong doubts have been expressed in this respect in the course of the past years by both Czech and foreign experts. Most of them were mainly concerned with the absence or insufficiency of a clear conceptual framework which would guide the HRD policy of the government. Although the past spontaneity and bottom-up nature of the education process can and probably should be considered as a highly positive phenomenon, it can also be, and was argued, that by now a series of measures and incentives are required if Czech HRD is to become an effective mechanism contributing to the overall transformation of the country. Until recently, some of these measures have been insufficient or altogether lacking.

Firstly, HRD was, and is, in no way stimulated by the prevailing fiscal policy. There are virtually no tax deductions or targeted taxes which would facilitate investment in

education by individuals and enterprises. The latter in particular are taxed on the same footing, whether or not they are engaged in training activities for their personnel.

Secondly, until the middle of 1995, no legislation existed concerning non-profit organisations into which at least some education institutions could be assimilated. This situation was obviously in contradiction to the government's wish to diversify the financing of education away from exclusively public sources.

Thirdly, there is little co-ordination between the different ministries involved with HRD in the broad sense of the term, including not only education in schools but also training in enterprises, combining education and other human research development measures. Each of them, and there are at least five, has its own approach, and so far no integrated concept or guidelines have developed. This can clearly be interpreted again as an absence of an overall government policy concerning education and HRD.

A fourth point is that the wage policy in place until the summer of 1995 had some negative effects on HRD. For example, in order to maintain macro-economic stability and avoid inflation, a relatively tight wage regulation was maintained or re-introduced. Leaving aside questions as to its stabilising effect, wage regulation had negative implications for the implementation of a more differentiated wage distribution, and especially in terms of rewards for top qualifications and more responsible or creative work. Thus, wages were inflexible both downwardly (being blocked by the minimum wage) and upwardly (ceiling created by wage regulation). However, since July 1995, wage regulation has been entirely abolished and this factor will no longer have any effect.

A special case in this connection are the salaries of personnel in the education sector. As has been shown (Table 2.1), salaries in this sector have increased less than in others. Furthermore, the situation is particularly bad with regard to starting salaries for young teachers, which can lead to a real brain drain from this profession in the longer run, and is already contributing to an unfavourable age structure.

Critics of government policy can argue that this represents evidence of the relatively low esteem in which the government holds the main agents of HRD – teachers and other education personnel – and HRD in general. In response to this criticism, the Ministry of Finance, and government in general, can in turn argue that education and training have benefited, as shown above, from growing allocations and that the relatively slow growth of teachers' salaries was due to the fact that the increasing amounts which the government allocated for education were to a large extent absorbed by the growth in the number of pupils, schools and classes and the decrease in the number of pupils per teacher.

Finally, the problem of continuing education should be mentioned again in this context. As already stated, the number of institutions offering various courses and the demand for such courses has risen substantially. However, in the Czech Republic, continuing education and especially adult vocational education is in a most chaotic state. It not only lacks any kind of co-ordination and steering (which, in fact, is the case in many countries), but it has no appropriate legislative basis, no quality control, nor does it dispose of any comprehensive information system. Probably most important, it does not benefit from any incentive mechanisms (e.g. tax reliefs) which would stimulate, in particular, enterprises to devote more effort and resources to training their employees. The quantitatively positive, but probably still very insufficient, development of continu-

ing education over the last few years was essentially the result of a demand from individuals, without any basis in true analysis of longer-term labour market needs. An important exception in this respect are so called requalification courses accredited by the Ministry of Education, but they cover only a small part of the country's requirements in adult education. In general, it can therefore be said that, in spite of its key importance for human resources development, continuing and adult education have not so far become an integral part of the education and training policy of the government.

All the above deficiencies of the Czech approach to HRD could be at least a partial explanation for the situation which has developed over the past years: the restoration of the value of education and human capital, a vital condition for the successful realisation of the overall transition and modernisation process, has so far occurred much more rapidly in people's minds, beliefs and behaviour, than in actual government policies, which should accompany or even steer this development.

The absence of such a policy can, of course, be justified by certain very radical liberal views which, occasionally, have been expressed even by highly placed persons in the government hierarchy: namely that education is primarily, if not exclusively, a "private good" and a matter of individual interest rather than of the state and society as a whole; in other words, from a strictly economic point of view, education should be considered as consumption and not as investment.

However, in comparison to the period before 1994, the latest developments in the Ministry of Education point to a new and different direction. A main indication of this trend is a document entitled *Quality and Accountability*, prepared and published by the ministry in October 1994.

First of all, the document is a response to earlier mentioned criticism by experts concerning the absence of an overall conceptual framework which would guide the HRD policy of the government. It represents at least a first attempt towards the creation of such a framework. Secondly, the document formulates not only general principles of education transformation, but also the main concrete steps towards the implementation of these principles. Thirdly, it at least implicitly deals with HRD as a global concept, considering among other things continuing and adult education as an integral part of HRD. Finally, both implicitly and explicitly, it defines the role and responsibility of the state in HRD, without abandoning the principle of a liberal policy (although not necessarily a radical liberal policy), based on the values of school and individual autonomy.

Quality and Accountability was, and remains, a report of the Ministry of Education. It was not endorsed by the government, nor has it been formally submitted to Parliament. This undoubtedly diminishes its potential impact on policy formulation in other ministries (e.g. Finance, Economy or Labour) which are all nevertheless important for the future of HRD. However, other documents have been or are being prepared by the Ministry of Education. In particular, a national report on the state of education will, from 1995 onward, be presented regularly to the Parliament.

Equally important, this time for the overall government policy concerning HRD, are the recent abolishment of wage regulation (which opens more possibilities for increased income differentiation according to levels of education, and thus for an increase of return to human capital), and the new legislation concerning non-profit organisations. Finally,

some significant progress has been achieved in the last part of 1995 towards increasing teachers' salaries, which, to some extent at least, implies a recognition of their importance for HRD (and, in a sense, of HRD as such).

All these signs, including recent Ministry of Education documents as well as the increased part of GDP devoted to education expenditure, provide evidence that a new, more comprehensive view of HRD policy and of its role in the transition process (and beyond) is emerging. Hopefully, it will contribute to the formulation and implementation of policies not only in the education sector as such but in all areas, and particularly in the fiscal one, upon which a successful HRD depends. This should also help to overcome the gap between the rapidly and positively developing attitudes, perceptions and behaviours of individuals and society at large towards the value of human capital, and the actual policies pursued in this respect by the government.

Chapter 3

INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE AND CURRICULUM CHANGES: QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE DEVELOPMENTS

Institutional structure

Although the institutional structure of the education system has undergone significant changes, it nevertheless closely resembles the system before 1989. This can be partly attributed to the fact that education institutions which have developed over a long period are slow to react to socio-political and economic changes, and more importantly to the fact that current legislation (with the exception of legislation for university-level education) is the result of partial amendments to previous legislation rather than a conceptually new Education Act.

The education system is divided into the following sectors (see Annex 2):

- pre-school institutions (*předškolní zařízení*);
- basic schools (*základní školy*);
- secondary schools (*střední školy*);
- special schools (*speciální školy*);
- out-of-school education institutions (*školská zařízení pro výchovu mimo vyučování a péči o dítě a mládež*);
- higher education institutions; including universities (*vysoké školy*).

All schools and education establishments (with the exception of higher education institutions) are part either of the state education system (including schools which are administered by municipalities), or of the non-state system (including private and denominational schools). Legislation was expected permitting, among others, the establishment of non-state higher education institutions, but the proposed Bill did not meet Parliament approval. Higher education institutions and secondary schools are legal entities, whilst other schools and education institutions can only make use of this right if they fulfil certain necessary conditions. Different schools under the same founder can be merged or established as a single legal entity (integrated schools).

3.1

Pre-school institutions (ISCED 0)

Parents are given the option of sending children under the age of six to pre-school institutions. Kindergartens (*mateřské školy*) provide education for children between the ages of three and five, although in exceptional cases they accept children under three as well as those over five, if it is considered that the latter are not ready for basic school. Kindergartens are traditionally a part of the education system governed by the Ministry of Education. Attendance at kindergarten is usually for the whole day. *Crèches (jesle)*, which are administered by the Ministry of Health, care for children up to the age of three. Parents contribute up to 30 per cent of the costs connected with running pre-school institutions. The precise amount is determined by the founding body (municipality).

After 1989-90, the proportion of children enrolled at kindergartens dropped from 98.7 per cent to 82.7 per cent (in the year 1991-92), after which it increased again to 88.5 per cent in 1995-96 (for three to five year-olds). The drop was a result of the closure of some kindergartens as part of the privatisation process of state property and agricultural co-operatives, the reduction in the number of employed women and financial saving measures of the transformation process. The number of schools has dropped by 11.6 per cent and demand for places is now greater than their reduced capacity. Kindergartens now place a greater emphasis on meeting the natural needs of children and the development of their personality in co-operation with the family. This contrasts with the former approach which was based predominantly on cognitive development, preparation for school and conformity to social norms.

Basic schools (ISCED 1 + 2)

The Czech basic school combines the primary and lower secondary level of education within one organisational unit. Education at state basic schools, administered by municipalities, is free of charge, while fees are charged by non-state schools. Parents may enrol their child at a school outside their catchment area.

Attendance at school is obligatory starting at the ages of six for a period of nine years. Until now, the majority of students have moved up to secondary school after the eighth year and only a minority have continued at basic school into the ninth year. A transition to compulsory ninth-year attendance at basic school for all pupils will come into force in the year 1996-97. Consequently, there will be practically no pupils in the first year of upper secondary schools in that year. At the same time, the total length of school attendance for those completing full secondary education will be extended by one year (mainly to 13 years).

Basic school is divided into two levels. The first level comprises school years 1 to 5 (formerly 1 to 4) and the second level comprises school years 6 to 9 (formerly 5 to 8). In the first level, all subjects are taught by one class teacher, whilst instruction in the second level is given by teachers specialising mostly in two subjects. The extension of the first level should alleviate the time constraints on teaching basic skills and individual instruction.

The number of pupils at basic schools is falling, mainly as a result of a drop in the number of children in the six to 14 age group. The drop in the number of pupils was 18 per cent in 1995-96 compared to 1989-90. Nevertheless, the number of basic schools increased by 8 per cent and their network has grown in density, owing to the revival of schools catering to the first level (1 to 4 or 5 years) only and to the opening of schools with fewer classes (one or two). Currently, these schools make up approximately 4 per cent of the total number of schools and enrol 8 per cent of the total number of pupils. This development reflects the government policy in support of small towns and villages and the concept of the school as the natural centre of a town or village. As a consequence, the average size of schools in terms of number of pupils has decreased (from 316 to 236). At the same time, the number of pupils per class has also fallen (from 26.4 to 22.2).

The 1990 amendment to the Education Act opened the way for *gymnasia* of more than four-years duration (multi-year *gymnasia*). Pupils may transfer to multi-year *gymnasia* upon completion of the first level of basic school and while they are still subject to compulsory school attendance. The number of pupils transferring to multi-year *gymnasia* is growing and has reached almost 11 per cent of the corresponding age group. This has brought about a revival of the institutional separation of schools at the level of lower secondary education which existed until 1948. The decision arose from the postulate that pupils with higher intellectual capabilities should be provided with a more demanding education than what basic schools, with their extremely heterogeneous pupil population, are able to offer.

Secondary schools (ISCED 3)

The category "secondary school" in the Czech Republic refers to the upper secondary level of education (with the exception of the lower years in the multi-year *gymnasia*). In secondary schools founded and administered by the state (*i.e.* the appropriate ministry), education is free of charge, as it is in basic schools, while non-state secondary schools charge fees. All pupils who have successfully completed basic school education can apply for a place at a secondary school of their choice, and must then undergo a written and oral exam. The overall number of pupils accepted as well as the acceptance of individual pupils is decided by the school director. There are three types of secondary school: *gymnasia*, secondary technical schools (*Střední odborné školy*) and secondary vocational schools (*Střední odborná učiliště*).

Gymnasia provide a general education at secondary level for four years continuing on from the ninth year of basic school, or for eight or six years continuing on from the fifth or seventh year of basic school (at the new multi-year *gymnasia*). Studies are completed by a final examination known as *Maturita*. Graduates from *gymnasia* have obtained a "full secondary education". The function of the *gymnasia* is predominantly to prepare pupils for higher education. At the same time, however, *gymnasia* provide the necessary education to enter professions requiring a broad general education without specific professional training.

Secondary technical schools (*Střední odborné školy* – SOSs) offer four-year courses in professionally oriented study. They can be divided into industrial schools (mechanical,

electrical and chemical engineering, construction, etc.), and schools of agriculture, commerce, health care, home economics, arts, and other such professional activities. They provide education and training for potential employees in all areas of the national economy (industry, public administration, education, cultural activities, health and social services). Studies end with the *Maturita* exam, which also allows the pupil to apply for a place at any higher education establishment, and which is considered equal to the *Maturita* qualification from *gymnasia*. Graduates from the four-year *Maturita* course at a SOS obtain a "full secondary professional education", while a small number of graduates from the newly established shorter two to three-year courses obtain a "secondary professional education", which does not allow them to apply for a place at a higher education institution.

Secondary technical schools have hitherto been able to offer post-*Maturita* courses (one to three years), for those pupils who have graduated from any secondary school with *Maturita*. These courses provided the opportunity to acquire or renew professional qualifications, to requalify or to specialise. In the near future, post-*Maturita* studies will no longer be offered and will be replaced with an alternative type of post-secondary education (at higher professional schools).

Secondary vocational schools (*Střední odborna učiliště* – SOUs) offer two or three-year courses of vocational training, after which pupils are qualified as skilled workers and for service occupations. Upon passing the final exams, pupils obtain an apprentice certificate (*vyučni list*) and have reached the level of "secondary vocational education". Alternatively, pupils may follow either a four-year course, or a two-year follow-up course, after the initial three years. Only four and five-year (*i.e.* 3+2) courses may lead, in addition to the apprentice certificate, to the *Maturita* exam which gives successful candidates the right to apply for entrance at institutions of higher education and other post-secondary institutions. Graduates of these courses have reached the level of "full secondary vocational education". Some SOUs and SOSs are being transformed into integrated secondary schools (*integrované střední školy*), which combine within a single institution, professional and vocational courses currently offered by these vocational and technical schools. Another institutional innovation is the vocational training centre (*Centra odborné přípravy*), which offers qualification and requalification courses for Employment Offices, enterprises and adults.

Vocational schools (*učiliště*), not formally considered to be secondary schools, offer the possibility of one to two-year training for pupils who have not finished basic school and have no further qualification.

In practice this means that the entire population of 15 year-olds continues to attend schools of some sort and receives training for a profession or trade. Secondary general and technical schools are administered mainly by the Ministry of Education, and in some cases (according to the area of specialisation), by the Ministries of Health, Agriculture, Interior or Defence. Until 1996, the responsibility for secondary vocational schools mainly belongs to the Ministry of Economy.

The development of the number of pupils entering secondary schools (see Table 3.1) was rather uneven. Altogether their total decreased by 16 per cent in 1995-96 as compared to 1989-90. This decline was mainly influenced by the demographic factor: the

Table 3.1. **Developments in the number of pupils in the first year of secondary technical and secondary vocational schools, and in *gymnasium* classes corresponding to the first year of upper secondary education**[1]

Full-time students only

	Number of pupils								
	Gymnasium	Secondary Technical Schools			Secondary Vocational and Vocational schools			Total	*Of which* with *Maturita*
		With *Maturita*	Without *Maturita*	Total	Non *Maturita*	With *Maturita*	Total		
1989/90	26 124	42 128	0	42 128	97 020	9 945	106 965	175 217	78 197
1991/92	19 134	34 947	7 848	42 795	75 804	7 152	82 956	144 885	61 233
1992/93	20 413	47 056	4 913	49 989	85 138	9 457	94 595	164 997	74 946
1993/94	23 736	51 920	3 524	55 444	83 016	8 129	91 082	170 262	83 785
1994/95	24 674	58 726	2 570	61 296	70 259	9 682	79 941	165 911	93 082
1995/96	22 634	54 242	2 226	56 486	60 562	7 362	67 924	147 111	85 458
	In %								
1989/90	14.90	24.01	0	24.04	56.37	5.67	61.04	100.00	44.63
1991/92	13.20	24.12	5.41	29.53	52.32	4.93	57.26	100.00	42.26
1992/93	12.37	27.31	2.98	30.29	51.60	5.73	57.33	100.00	45.42
1993/94	13.94	30.50	2.06	32.56	48.76	4.77	53.50	100.00	49.21
1994/95	15.82	35.32	1.51	36.93	41.39	5.86	47.24	100.00	57.09
1995/96	15.39	36.89	1.51	38.41	44.19	5.01	46.20	100.00	57.29

1. Data for 1990-91 not available.

Source: Yearbooks of the Institute for Information in Education.

15-year-old age group has, indeed, decreased by as much as 25 per cent. On the contrary, a significant growth took place in respect to the number of students completing secondary education by a *Maturita* examination. Their number increased by 9 per cent and, especially, their part in the total number of new entrants grew from 44.6 per cent in 1989 to 57.3 per cent in 1995. The fastest quantitative growth took place in "*Maturita* students" of secondary technical schools (by 29 per cent) while the number of non-*Maturita* students in secondary vocational schools has diminished by 38 per cent. This development has taken place principally because binding directives on the number of pupils allowed to attend different secondary schools were abolished, which gave the schools more freedom to decide on their intake and exposed them to free demand.

The number of pupils entering *gymnasia* and their proportion of the total number of pupils entering upper secondary schools remains almost constant (15 to 16 per cent). The proportion of pupils entering secondary technical schools increased sharply and reached over 38 per cent in 1995-96, compared with 24 per cent in 1989-90. The opposite occurred in secondary vocational schools, where the corresponding figures dropped from 61 per cent to 46 per cent over the same period. At the same time, the overall number of pupils in courses leading to the *Maturita* rose from 45 per cent to 57 per cent. A full

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secondary education or a full secondary technical education is beginning to be regarded in general as the necessary educational standard for the future.

The number of *gymnasia* increased during the period 1989-90 to 1995-96 by 62 per cent. With the significantly more moderate growth in the number of pupils, their average size decreased (from 451 to 365 pupils), as did the number of pupils per class (34.9 to 28.2). Secondary technical schools underwent a dramatic growth, increasing in number by almost two and a half times (from 375 to 834). Their decrease in size (from 426 to 213 pupils) was even greater than that of *gymnasia*, with the number of pupils per class falling from 32.6 to 24.6. Together with a drop in pupils, secondary vocational schools experienced a very moderate increase in the number of school (about 9 per cent) and a decrease in school (from 465 to 318 pupils) and class size (from 27.5 to 23.6).

The preference for full secondary technical education is influenced by the pragmatic view that *Maturita* studies at SOSs facilitate direct entry into a profession, while at the same time securing the option of applying for a place in higher education. The *gymnasia Maturita* is understood as exclusively a preparation for higher education. In view of the limited capacity of higher education establishments and the high possibility of failure in the demanding entrance exams, this can mean a real handicap in the search for employment.

Special schools

Special schools are attended by children and young people presenting physical or mental disabilities or who, for other reasons, have difficulties attending regular schools. They are for children and young people between the ages of three and 18 and are divided into kindergartens, basic schools and secondary schools (including vocational schools). The newly established "practical school" prepares pupils for a qualification in an undemanding occupation. For pupils of compulsory school-age with mental disabilities, there are separate special and auxiliary schools. Non-state schools excepted, attendance at special schools is free of charge. An increasing number of disabled pupils are attending ordinary schools. The number of special schools has increased (by about one third) alongside a moderate drop in the number of pupils.

Out-of-school education institutions for children and young people

Out-of-school education institutions have an important support function in the Czech education system. They provide professional care for children and young people outside of school hours (activity centres and school clubs, youth homes), special-interest instruction (basic art schools and centres for children and young people). They may also provide for the care and upbringing of children whose own families are unable to do so (children's homes and youth homes). With the exception of those providing the latter service, parents contribute to the costs of these institutions. Only the basic art schools, offering music, art, dance and drama courses, have experienced a growth in numbers (by 42 per cent) and in pupils.

Non-state schools

Non-state schools were created after 1989 with the aim of diversifying the educational supply in order that it could better correspond to the interests of pupils and needs of the labour market, and thus achieve in as short a time as possible the widest possible choice of educational paths. Additionally, they were expected to create a competitive environment which would induce even state schools to better respond to educational demands. To a certain extent at least, they also offer their pupils above-standard conditions, such as smaller classes, higher quality staff, innovative teaching methods, the use of external experts, etc. Such conditions can be met thanks to school fees, which are between CZK 6 000 and 20 000 per year.

Private schools have reacted quickly to changes in the labour market and to the demand of parents and pupils for higher quality teaching. This concerned, on the one hand, *gymnasia*, which for a long time had a limited educational capacity as a result of education policy under the former regime, and on the other hand, secondary technical schools providing training in the areas of commerce, services, tourism, etc., where there was little on offer, owing to the preference given during the same period to training workers for the primary and secondary sectors of the economy (see Table 3.2).

Table 3.2. **Number of schools and pupils according to founder, 1995-96**

	Number of schools				Proportion of schools in %		
	Total	State	Private	Denom.	State	Private	Denom.
Kindergarten	6 457	6 320	121	16	97.9	1.9	0.2
Basic	4 212	4 517	39	16	98.7	0.9	0.4
Special	1 077	1 017	50	10	94.4	4.6	0.9
Gymnasium	361	282	65	14	78.1	18.0	3.9
Secondary technical	834	535	276	23	64.1	33.2	2.8
Secondary vocational	533	429	102	2	80.5	19.1	0.47
Integrated secondary technical	201	200	1	0	99.5	0.5	0.0
Basic art school	468	429	37	2	91.5	7.9	0.4
	Number of pupils				Proportion of pupils in %		
	Total	State	Private	Denom.	State	Private	Denom.
Kindergarten	333 433	326 356	6 333	711	97.9	1.9	0.2
Basic	993 585	989 243	2 453	1 889	99.6	0.2	0.2
Special	74 888	72 183	2 426	279	99.4	3.2	0.4
Gymnasium	131 644	116 671	10 217	4 756	88.6	7.8	3.6
Secondary technical	225 705	186 795	37 468	1 442	82.8	16.6	0.6
Secondary vocational	234 305	210 908	23 243	154	90.0	9.9	0.1
Basic art school	229 442	218 282	10 851	309	95.1	4.7	0.1

Source: Yearbooks of the Institute for Information in Education.

Statistics show that non-state schools have emerged predominantly at the upper secondary level. The proportion of non-state schools at this level now amounts to 25 per cent and the proportion of pupils to 13 per cent. The main emphasis is on the private secondary technical schools, which amount to 36 per cent of the total number of schools, and more than 17 per cent of pupils in this education sector. Similar data for *gymnasia* are 22 per cent and 11 per cent. The number of private and denominational basic schools is negligible, because the sphere of pre-school and compulsory education is regarded as the domain of the state (or, more precisely, of local authorities). Private schools are overall much more numerous than denominational schools sponsored by religious institutions. The latter concentrate mainly on *gymnasia*.

Higher education institutions (ISCED 5, 6, 7)

Higher education is currently provided by (general) universities, technical, agricultural, veterinary and other specialised higher education institutions. All of them have university status (and sometimes bear also the name, e.g. technical university) and comprise three levels: three-year studies leading to the degree of "Bachelor" (*Bc.*), four to six-year studies leading to the degree of "Magister" (*Mgr.*) or "Engineer" (*Ing.*), and doctoral studies (three years more than the "Magister").

Since 1989-90, there has been an increase in the intake of full-time students (see Table 3.3) and a decrease in the number of part-time students (from 19 per cent of the total number of students in 1989 to 9 per cent).

Approximately one quarter of all applicants are enrolled in bachelor studies introduced in 1990. Doctoral studies have developed significantly and in 1995, they existed in a total of 430 fields. They were attended by some 8 200 students. This type of study has almost completely replaced the previously existing system run by the Academy of Sciences (*aspirantura*).

As a result of the growing interest of applicants, institutions of higher education are still only able to meet approximately 50 per cent of the demand for places. This interest obviously corresponds to the increasing social prestige of education, as well as to the growing financial rewards for education in the labour market.

The creation of new institutions and faculties outside of the main university centres has, for now, brought about only moderate changes in the regional distribution of

Table 3.3 **Numbers of new entrants in higher education from 1989-90 to 1995-96**

Full-time students only

	1989/90	1990/91	1991/92	1992/93	1993/94	1994/95	1995/96
Enrolled	22 846	24 494	22 578	28 101	30 350	33 444	35 627
% of 19-year-olds	15.2	15.3	12.8	14.9	16.6	17.8	20.1

Source: Yearbooks of the Institute for Information in Education.

students. A considerable concentration of students in large cities remains, with 63 per cent of all students enrolled in the two main conurbations of Prague and Brno. The total number of higher education institutions is 23, in addition to which there are a three military academies and one police academy; the total number of faculties is 110 (38 more than in 1989).

In the Czech Republic, post-secondary education with non-higher education status is developing alongside higher education. Until 1996 it was provided mainly within "post-*Maturita*" courses at secondary technical schools, in which students could upgrade their skills or acquire new qualifications. These courses were very popular. In the year 1989-90 they had approximately 3 000 participants and their numbers had risen four-fold by the year 1994-95.

Thus, in addition to the 19 to 20 per cent of young people admitted to traditional higher education studies, 6 to 7 per cent of 18-year-olds are enrolled in post-secondary course with non-higher education status. Consequently a total of at least 25 per cent of young people of the corresponding age group attended some form of post-secondary education in 1995.

Two events are presently influencing significantly the further development of the post-secondary education sector. Firstly, since 1991 several secondary technical schools have established, with important international (mainly Dutch) support, a new type of post-secondary institution called "higher professional school" (*Vyssí odborná škola*). They provide an education which is somewhere in between the traditionally conceived, theoretically and academically oriented higher education and secondary school courses, fulfilling more or less the role assumed in Western countries by the non-university sector of higher education. Their aim is to offer students usually a three-year course with emphasis on a practical (vocational) orientation and access to middle level (and sometimes also higher level) management positions both in industry and in the service sector (*techniciens supérieurs*, in France). As of 1995, 23 such schools, with some 3 300 students, had been established. They were considered by the Ministry of Education as a pilot experiment and administratively, as part of the secondary school system, not as higher education institutions.

Secondly, following the 1995 amendment to the Education Act, the experimental higher professional schools became a recognised new sector of the education system, and in the spring of 1996, 165 institutions proposing to create or to become a higher professional schools have been accredited by the ministry. These institutions are supposed to replace all the existing above-mentioned post-*Maturita* courses (as of 1996-97).

Whether the new higher professional schools will eventually be recognised as part of the higher education system – as most of them would wish and to which existing higher education institutions are generally opposed – is for the moment an open question. An indirect, not necessarily intended, step in this direction was implied in the rejected Higher Education Bill. The latter proposed and authorised the creation of so called "higher education institutes" – both within and outside universities – which, to same extent at least, replicated the aims and orientations of higher professional schools. Many of the existing higher professional schools were hoping to be "promoted" to the status of a higher education institute and thus become a recognised part of higher education, as

opposed to their present status as secondary schools (or at the best "extended secondary schools").

As a brief conclusion, the future of Czech higher education, considered in its broad meaning as a comprehensive post-secondary or tertiary sector, is at this point rather unclear. Very much will depend on whether and when a new Higher Education Bill will be presented and what it will include, as well as on the development and performance of the newly accredited higher professional schools. In any case, it seems obvious that the demand for a diversified system of post-secondary (tertiary) education is growing rapidly in the Czech Republic, as in other advanced countries.

Curriculum changes in basic and secondary schools

Decisions about the goals and content of teaching, how subjects should be arranged in the course of the year and how the activities of the teachers and pupils should be organised have traditionally belonged to the central state body – the Ministry of Education. The basic normative curricular documents were the *učební plány*, which set down the obligatory composition of subjects appropriate to the sector of education or the type of school, their place in the school years and a timetable specifying their instruction on a weekly basis. Directly linked to the curriculum were the *učební osnovy* (syllabi), setting down the course of study and instructions for teaching the individual subjects in each school year. Schools and teachers regarded themselves, in this tradition, as merely the executors of central curricular decisions. Parallel to the conceptual and structural changes in the education system, changes have also taken place since 1990 in the understanding, processing and implementation of the curricular documents.

An important step towards relaxing rules on curricula was the decision of the ministry to give all state-school directors the right to:

- adjust the curriculum to an extent of 10 per cent of the credit hours;
- adjust the content of the teaching syllabi of individual subjects to an extent of 30 per cent of credit hours, either by a change in proportions or by the addition or the omission of subject matter;
- create their own educational programme, which, however, must pass the ratification procedure at the Ministry of Education.

In general, it is possible to characterise the most recent period as a transition from a directed, vertical model of curricular policy to a liberal and participative model. At present, however, the opinion is commonly held that a comprehensive curricular reform is the affair of the next period.

Responsibility for creating national curricula for state education still lies with the Czech Ministry of Education. In order to carry this out, the ministry creates working groups, or, entrusting the task to relevant bodies, co-ordinates their work and approves the final curricular documents. The process of curriculum development has become noticeably democratic in the period between 1990 and 1994. Informal teacher groups, teacher organisations and independent professional associations have all contributed to

the innovations in the existing curricula and the creation of new curricula for general education and vocational and technical education (VOTEC). The central schools administration has also made possible, and supports, the development of alternative curricula in state education. These alternative programmes (the majority of which are considered as "experimental") are subject to the approval and control of the ministry.

Already, in the first phase of the transformation process, a revision and content reconstruction of the humanities and social science components of education was carried out, particularly in the fields of national and world history, literature and geography. The content of subjects relating to the social sciences, philosophical and ethical matters was conceived entirely anew.

Compulsory Russian instruction was replaced by a choice of one foreign language, either English, German, French or Russian. Teaching hours devoted to their instruction have been increased and it is anticipated that a first foreign language will be introduced from the fourth year of basic school following the recruitment of additional qualified teachers.

Religious education as a non-compulsory subject in basic schools has been revived. Evidence of the humanisation of education can also be seen in the substantial strengthening of ecological, family and sex education and in the attempt to make more room in the curricula for teaching aesthetics.

Optional and non-compulsory subjects play a larger role than in the past and their number has risen. On the other hand, however, within the general education system, a certain reduction in the teaching of mathematics and natural sciences is occurring.

With the liberalisation of the education system, its diversification and the increase in the pedagogical autonomy of schools and teachers, a question has arisen: by what means can the desired quality of education, the transferability between educational paths, and the comparability of the achieved results be objectively ensured? For this reason, a newly developed standard of education was adopted (curriculum guidelines) for basic schools, which contains the basic educational aims and curricular content of different educational fields. These guidelines should become, at the level of the Ministry of Education, a general basis for the development of model educational programmes. Other programmes should be developed spontaneously by *ad hoc* teams or individual schools. At the same time, work is underway on the development of educational standards for *gymnasia*, and on professional profiles for VOTEC.

From 1990 to 1994, the existing rigid procedure concerning the creation and use of textbooks and teaching aids in basic schools and upper secondary schools was dismantled. The Ministry of Education currently leaves the creation of textbooks to independent publishers, who offer their publications to schools through the market; however, the ministry maintains its control over the content and methods of textbooks which schools can purchase from centrally allocated funds. It is within the competence of the school to decide which textbooks to use in which subject area. Even if, in many cases, publishers are concentrating on re-editing or revising already published textbooks, the way has been opened for the processing of alternative textbook themes and thus, for seeking new approaches to didactic innovations.

In basic and secondary schools of general education orientation, curriculum documents which reflect new principles in curricular policy are at present in force (see Annex 4).

Prior to November 1989, VOTEC curriculum was conceived, as in other sectors, as uniform, centrally fixed in great detail and strictly binding. VOTEC was systematically divided into education at secondary technical schools (SOSs) and secondary vocational schools (SOUs). It was precisely planned which schools would teach different fields and how many pupils would be educated in each particular field, all of this supposedly in accordance with the needs of the planned national economy. One of the basic changes which have taken place since 1989 is the departure from the previous approach, which was based on the assumption that graduates of vocational and technical training would work all their lives in the profession for which they were prepared.

Freedom in designing the educational supply, including fields of training which a school can offer, was first taken advantage of by private schools, not bound by any tradition, equipment and composition of teaching staff, and oriented above all towards areas where the offer of state schools was insufficient. This especially concerned economics, management and entrepreneurial skills, but also electro-technical sciences and fields which focused on occupations in banking, tourism, computer sciences and socio-legal activities.

In 1989, VOTEC covered 360 fields; between 1990 and 1993, 155 fields were reformed in state schools alone and 123 new fields arose, of which about two-thirds were in SOS. Thus, on average, 70 fields arise or are reformed every year, of which 30 are completely new (fields created in private schools, some 60 per year, are not included). A considerable diversification in the educational supply has thus come about, resulting in the abandonment of the earlier clear-cut specialisation of individual schools and, in several cases, even in a complete change in the character of the school. The most frequent reasons for reforming or creating a subject was the need for quality training, and changes in the professions for which school leavers are preparing. At the present time, work is underway on a new, reduced range of specialist training subjects, the individual elements of which will have a more general character.

Throughout the whole system of curricula for VOTEC, general and professional education are realised together. The teaching hours of general education subjects are thus much more than before differentiated according to the varying needs of the different field of training. However, overall, a growth in the number of hours devoted to languages (including the Czech language and literature) and a decrease in the teaching of mathematics have taken place. The average share of the number of teaching hours of the technical-professional component varies from 50 to 80 per cent; in the case of *Maturita* fields of secondary technical schools it represents 60 per cent, for three-year apprenticeship fields 70 per cent.

Curricular policy in Czech schooling is focused *inter alia* on the maximal development of all the abilities of a pupil. One of the problems hindering this is the necessity for the pupil to select a certain field and certain type of school immediately upon completion of basic school. If this situation is to improve, it is necessary to seek a new approach to

the arrangement of the curriculum of VOTEC. The following areas in particular are concerned:

- the concept of gradual selection, where pupils do not decide until after the first year of study whether they will follow an apprenticeship or a *Maturita* course, and in some cases also, in which field (to the extent that the joint first year offers an introduction to various occupations);
- training in fields with points of departure during the period of the course, with an appropriate final qualification in mutually linking shorter or longer studies;
- training in fields which at the first level provide an apprenticeship certificate, upon which the pupil decides whether to continue for the *Maturita* examination;
- divided training, where in a two-year vocational school, pupils gain pre-professional preparation in a very broad area, and then decide whether and how they will continue.

The entire development in this area reflects a trend towards blurring the sharp separation between the existing systems of vocational and technical education and the corresponding institutions, because this system is increasingly at odds with the requirements of the labour market and with the interests of pupils.

As far as the *Maturita* examinations are concerned, at *gymnasia*, they consist of two compulsory (Czech language and literature and a foreign language) and two optional subjects. The compulsory *Maturita* examinations in mathematics and foundation of technical subjects, which in the past was based on Marxist polytechnical principles, have been abolished, leaving more room for pupils to make their own selection from the choice of subjects offered. The school fixes the content of the *Maturita* examinations; precise and objective leaving requirements are not externally fixed or checked.

The school-leaving examination in *Maturita* fields of SOS and SOU consists of an examination in Czech language and literature, an examination in an optional subject, as well as both a theoretical and a practical examination in technical subjects. The content of both examinations in technical subjects are set by the school director and, just as at the *gymnasia*, do not have the character of an external examination. Pupils often have optional subjects in studies of peripheral significance. At the same time, however, the examinations are becoming even more markedly professional and specialised.

Higher education institutions do not consider the *Maturita* as an entirely objective guide to pupils' qualifications for further study, and run a costly application procedure which includes written tests on *Maturita* subjects. The purpose of *Maturita* examinations, along with their criteria and organisation, are presently the subject of discussion both within and outside the Ministry.

Chapter 4

WORKING CONDITIONS AND TRAINING OF TEACHERS

The reform of Czech society after 1989 brought changes to many aspects of teachers' work. A significant space for their independent creative work was created in the preparation of the content of individual subjects, in the choice of teaching methods, the choice of textbooks, etc. However, these new conditions have placed greater burdens on them, because for more than 40 years they had to follow syllabi which were binding and worked out in detail, and their work was controlled by the centre. Besides this, many had to deal with a temporary loss of their professional competency (pedagogical as well as technical), which necessitated partial, and sometimes even full, requalification (especially for teachers of social science subjects and foreign languages). Different teachers dealt in different ways with these and other changes, some quickly and well, others in the opposite.

Developments relating to the number of teachers

The education sector is one of the largest employers in the country. In the school-year 1995-96, the education sector employed 326 000 persons (6.5 per cent of total employment). In the education system directed by the Ministry of Education, 249 000 persons were employed, of whom 140 000 were teachers (56 per cent of all persons working in the sector). From this total number of teachers, 20 per cent work in kindergartens, 44 per cent in basic schools, 16 per cent in secondary schools, 6 per cent in special schools and 9 per cent in higher education institutions.

The trend connected with the development of the structure of the education system after the year 1989 is reflected in Table 4.1. In kindergartens – as a consequence of a reduction in their numbers – the number of teachers had dropped by 1993-94 by almost 13 per cent. The opposite tendency can be seen in basic schools, where the number of teachers grew until the year 1992-93 and has subsequently fallen. Over the entire period surveyed, the number of teachers grew by 2 per cent in spite of a 18 per cent drop in the number of pupils. The growth in the number of teachers in secondary education was much faster (by 33 per cent) than that of the number of pupils (4.6 per cent). The increase is particularly important in SOS, *i.e.* more than 69 per cent for a 45 per cent rise "only" in their number of pupils. At SOUs, the number of teachers rose by 7 per cent, while a

Table 4.1. **Teachers at kindergarten, basic and secondary schools**

Overall numbers for state and non-state schools

	1989/90	1990/91	1991/92	1992/93	1993/94	1994/95	1995/96
Kindergarten	31 790	32 112	29 884	29 984	27 394	27 695	28 080
Basic schools	61 791	63 110	63 965	65 186	63 769	63 531	63 019
Gymnasia	6 428	6 683	6 894	7 790	8 456	9 280	10 097
of which: Part-time	1 282	1 024	1 356	1 689	2 057	2 259	2 095
Secondary technical	12 233	12 807	12 683	14 537	16 854	18 035	20 690
of which: Part-time	4 278	4 815	6 137	8 405	9 607	7 773	10 823
Secondary vocational	10 792	10 502	10 149	10 573	11 240	11 585	8 344
of which: Part-time	2 450	2 254	2 341	2 600	2 755	3 133	2 495
Instructors of vocational training	17 195	15 794	13 440	13 066	12 939	12 235	8 320
Enterprise instructors	39 945	31 441	12 796	8 276	8 167	8 265	10 475

Source: Institute for Information in Education

Table 4.2. **Number of teachers in non-state schools**

	1991/92		1992/93		1993/94		1994/95	
	Private	Denominational	Private	Denominational	Private	Denominational	Private	Denominational
Kindergarten	4	12	10	23	177	51	548	66
Basic schools	75	32	130	88	291	113	307	168
Gymnasia	349	90	1 094	271	1 112	363	930	358
of which: Part-time	209	19	362	65	519	135	752	146
Secondary technical	1 503	164	3 977	346	4 866	368	3 315	159
of which: Part-time	685	74	1 683	139	2 919	216	3 913	269
Secondary vocational schools	392	x	454	28	1 470	34	1 289	14
of which: Part-time	117	x	168	19	479	18	839	18
Instructor of vocational training	255	x	328	1	1 012	?	1 078	0
Enterprise instructor	275	x	677	x	1 250	x	1 910	0

x Data not available

Source: Institute for Information in Education

Table 4.3. **Age structure of teachers, 1994**

In per cent

	-24 years	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
In schools	3.7	11.7	30.0	27.1	21.5	5.8
Men	1.9	8.4	24.2	22.6	29.2	13.7
Women	4.2	12.5	31.5	28.3	19.6	3.9
Outside schools	7.0	18.4	29.6	21.5	16.1	7.4

Source: Czech Statistical Office, 1994

drop of 18 per cent occurred in the number of pupils. The number of masters of technical training has fallen proportionately to the number of pupils (by 17 per cent), and the number of instructors leading practical training of pupils of secondary vocational schools has fallen the fastest: if originally there used to be eight pupils per instructor, their number is now 22.

A steep rise in the number of teachers occurred in the category of part-time teachers at secondary schools (90 per cent). The fastest in this respect occurred at SOSs (153 per cent) and *gymnasia* (60 per cent). This trend was particularly marked in non-state schools (see Table 4.2). While at state SOSs the ratio of full-time (resident) to part-time (external) teachers is 2.6:1, at private schools it is 0.8:1.

A traditional problem, which, however, does not only affect the Czech education system, is the continuing trend towards a feminisation of the teaching staff (72 per cent of teachers are women): in kindergartens it is 100 per cent; at the first level of basic school, 93 per cent; in *gymnasia*, 67 per cent; in SOS, 57 per cent; and in SOU, 56 per cent.

From an analysis of the age structure of teachers (see Table 4.3), ageing of the teaching force is evident. Amongst the youngest – those up to 24 years of age – almost twice as many qualified teachers work outside schools (private firms, banking sector, etc.) than in the school system. There are certainly many reasons for this, but among the most important ones are no doubt teachers' salaries and, especially, starting salaries (see further).

Teachers' working conditions and salaries

The employer of teachers in all legal aspects (*i.e.* hiring, work contract, salary, personal evaluation, work load) is either, in cases where the school has the status of a legal entity (all secondary schools and some basic schools), the director of the school, or if the school does not have this status, the district School Office. Teachers are employed according to their technical and pedagogic credentials (*i.e.* level of education and length of practice). If they meet the required conditions, a permanent work contract is negotiated.[1]

Teachers can become school directors if they have at least seven years teaching experience and successfully pass through a competition in which their technical and pedagogic credentials, as well as their general ability to discharge the function, are assessed. Appointments are made for an indefinite period.

Teachers' salaries

In the Czech Republic expenditure on education has increased every year (see Chapter 2) but because of inflation this increase has mainly covered running costs, and lately, also social and medical insurance, while salaries have remained basically stable since 1989, at the level of 2 per cent of GDP. This situation is reflected in the average salaries in the education sector, which remained at 95 per cent of the average salaries in the Czech Republic.

As a result, many teachers have an additional job and work especially in private schools which offer better working conditions and salaries. Others, namely those with qualifications and specialisations for which there is high demand on the labour market, are leaving the education sector altogether (language teachers, computer specialists, economics and mathematics graduates). The lack of teachers with these qualifications is already apparent to varying degrees, depending on the size of the school, its location, the economic standards of the catchment area, etc. Instruction is in such cases provided by unqualified or retired teachers. According to findings of the Ministry of Education, unqualified teachers in basic schools make up 7 per cent of the total and the percentage of retired teachers involved in the teaching process also approaches 7 per cent.

Analyses of teachers' salaries in relation with other professions in the Czech Republic and abroad show that the remuneration of Czech teachers is lower than that of teachers in most advanced countries. Moreover, Czech teachers are not given any other compensations such as allowances for housing, transport, clothing, etc. Czech teachers do not have the status of state or public employees and the security of tenure and their salaries are not in any way related to the costs of living in different areas of the country.

The greatest problems concerning teacher remuneration are the level of starting salaries, slow salary growth exclusively related to age and insufficient provision for evaluating the quality of teachers' work. Basic and secondary school teachers are the only profession to be assigned uniformly into one salary category according to the level of school at which they teach.[1] Other activities at a higher qualification level cannot result in promotion to a higher category. Present regulations allow quality work or extra work to be remunerated only by bonuses and special premiums. However, the volume of salary funds which may be allocated in the education sector for this purpose is relatively low and cannot sufficiently be used to differentiate and motivate the teachers.

The issue of teachers' salaries was the subject of heated debate until the summer of 1995. Teachers even threatened to strike at the beginning of the new school year. However, in August, the government decided to increase all basic salaries in the education sector on the average by 16.7 per cent and provided some additional money for remuneration of specific groups of personnel (for example, starting, young, special subjects, and special function teachers, etc.). The government promises a further increase in 1996. Teachers' unions ask for an increase of 30 per cent in basic salaries during that year.

Teachers' working hours

The working week of all employees in the education sector is the same as that of all other employees in the Czech Republic, namely 42.5 hours. The working week of teachers is divided into time strictly devoted to the teaching load and the hours spent in activities related to the educational process.[1] The director makes decisions about the distribution of working hours.

Table 4.4 **Number of pupils per class and per teacher**

	1989/90	1990/91	1991/92	1992/93	1993/94	1994/95	1995/96
	Number of pupils per class						
Kindergartens	24.7	21.8	21.2	21.3	22.7	23.0	22.7
Basic schools	26.9	25.4	24.3	23.3	23.2	22.4	22.2
Gymnasia	34.9	36.8	33.0	31.2	30.0	28.7	28.2
Secondary technical schools	31.8	31.5	30.3	26.3	24.5	26.3	26.3
Secondary vocational schools	27.6	26.4	24.7	24.2	24.0	24.0	23.2
	Number of pupils per teacher						
Kindergartens	12.5	11.0	10.8	10.9	12.1	12.2	11.9
Basic schools	20.0	18.9	18.2	17.1	16.6	16.0	15.8
Gymnasia	15.6	17.6	16.0	14.7	14.3	13.6	13.0
Secondary technical schools	12.7	12.7	13.2	11.8	11.0	11.9	11.7
Secondary vocational schools*	4.4	4.5	8.1	7.1	7.2	9.6	6.8

* In addition to resident teachers (7 800) professional experts and qualified foremen are also engaged to teach at secondary vocational schools (14 800).

Source: Institute for Information in Education.

The teaching load of teachers depends on the type of school (the teaching load of the school director is related to the size of the school): in kindergarten it is 30 hours; at the first level of basic school, 23 hours; at the second level of basic school, 22 hours; at secondary schools, 21 hours.[4] The length of a teaching hour is 45 minutes.

Class size and student-teacher ratio

In 1990 the Ministry of Education issued a decree under which the maximum class size was set at 30 pupils.[5] Since 1990, class sizes have been decreasing, which is desirable from a pedagogical perspective, but is beginning to cause economic problems (see Table 4.4).

Teacher training

Training for the teaching profession was entrusted to higher education institutions, *i.e.* both to universities and to other higher education establishments. Higher education study for the teaching profession is always supplemented by professional-practical experience at schools, which varies in length and is completed by the defence of a diploma thesis and the state final examination, on the basis of which graduates obtain a certificate relating to their pedagogic qualification as well as an academic title. At present, student teachers are trained for their future profession as follows.

Kindergarten teachers gain a full qualification from a four-year course completed with a *Maturita* examination in secondary teacher-training schools. There is also the possibility of attending a three-year bachelors' course at university faculties of education.

Basic and secondary school teachers obtain their pedagogical qualification following Magister courses. Teachers at the first level of basic school obtain their Magister qualification in four-year courses, usually at university faculties of education. Second-level basic school teachers and teachers of general education subjects at secondary schools (usually a combination of two subjects) obtain their qualification through four or five-year Magister studies at faculties of education or other university faculties. Teachers of technical subjects at secondary technical and secondary vocational schools prepare themselves in Magister study at specialised higher education institutions (technical universities, schools of agriculture, faculties of medicine, theology and fine arts, etc.). Teachers in special education are trained for the teaching profession in four or five-year Magister courses at faculties of education. It is also possible to gain the qualification for teaching following the completion of a diploma from an institution of higher education through complementary pedagogic study lasting usually two years.

In recent years, some faculties introduced single subject courses, usually three-year, which are concluded with a final examination and the title of Bachelor. The introduction of this type of study was necessitated mainly by the dearth of language-teaching specialists.

Current problems relating to teacher training

The basic change in university teacher training which took place after 1989 consisted in opening the way for faculties to independently define the content and methodology of teacher training. Decrees previously issued by the Ministry of Education on the structure of courses and on final examinations qualifying teachers for their profession ceased to apply. Apart from the Faculty of Education of Charles University, most other faculties of education introduced a differentiation between teacher training for the second level of basic school and teacher training for secondary schools. This development reflected the attempts of some university faculties to de-professionalise teacher training to limit its theoretical and practical pedagogical components and to introduce two teacher categories differing in their level of education and prestige.

A widely discussed question is the issue of teaching practice. Hitherto, it was always oriented didactically (*i.e.* explicitly towards the teaching methods of different subjects), while very little attention was given to the teacher's work with the pupil (*i.e.* questions of diagnostics, communication, evaluation, etc.). Another discussed question is the relationship between subject teaching and the pedagogical and psychological components of teacher training. Both students and their teachers tend to considerably underestimate the latter.

On the basis of an evaluation of faculties of education by the Accreditation Commission between 1993 and 1995, principles have been established which should apply to teacher training for schools of all types and levels: courses for student teachers for all schools should be at the Magister level and should be run by faculties of education and

other university faculties. Faculties of education are authorised to train all teaching categories, including those at the doctoral level, if they have the accreditation to do so.

In-service teacher training

Until 1989, the system of in-service training was very formal and in terms of the lifelong professional development of teachers, not very functional. This system of in-service training was abolished in 1991, albeit with some reservations on the part of teachers, and has so far not been replaced with anything else. What is sorely lacking in this respect is a comprehensive concept of in-service training, the interlinkage of qualification growth, promotion and salary scales, as well as a network of institutions and specialists providing these.

The concept of in-service teacher training as prepared by the Ministry of Education requires a highly diversified structure of establishments. The core of the system should be the *educational centres* created by the Ministry, essentially as administrative and service institutions, which will be concerned with the training of all categories of teaching staff, as well as that of others working in education. *District education* centres, established by School Offices, will represent an additional part of the system and will be primarily concerned with in-service training of basic school and kindergarten teachers. As an important part of this system, higher education institutions will ensure mainly the complementary pedagogical studies and also the development of a theoretical background and of educational programmes in the area of in-service training. The basic unit of the new system should be the school itself and its director.

Prospects for further development

A problem which, given the large numbers of teachers, is very likely to surface in the short term, is the widely discrepant professional level of individual teachers in terms of approach to children, to teaching, etc. Some teachers are involved in curriculum and methodology development through voluntary associations such as NEMES (Independent Inter-Sector Group for Transformation in Education), PAU (Friends of Involved Learning), or in various ministerial projects, such as the "General Basic School Curriculum" (*Obecná škola*) and the "Civil School Curriculum" (*Občanská škola* for the second cycle of basic schools), etc. However, they represent but a very small minority. As mentioned earlier, the still unsatisfactory remuneration system, changes in the cost of living and changes in the social climate (such as the increase of consumer-oriented thinking) are already leading to a lack of qualified teachers in many schools (especially at basic schools), as teaching staff leave the education sector for more satisfying and lucrative jobs. Hence the importance of improving the status and working conditions of teachers and their career prospects.

An important role in the further upgrading of the school system is played by institutions of higher education providing teacher training. However, as already mentioned, the views of many academic leaders concerning teacher training are in complete

contradiction with endeavours to improve the professional qualities of the teaching profession (e.g. the call for shorter teacher training courses, especially for basic school teachers, the underestimation of pedagogical, psychological and didactic training, etc.). This would almost certainly have a negative impact on the development of the teaching profession as a whole. In this process, it is the Ministry of Education, as the largest employer of teachers, which will have to assume the deciding role by unambiguously defining its requirements on the qualification of each individual teacher category. In general, it does not approve the above "academic views" and, on the contrary, pushes towards improvements in teaching status and training.

This is shown, in particular, by the draft of a coherent programme, called "Teacher", which the Ministry prepared in November 1995. The programme deals with three key issues: teacher training, development of teachers' careers (including salary questions) and in-service teacher training. The programme is presently under public discussion and some of the proposed measures are expected to be implemented already in 1996-97.

Chapter 5

GOVERNANCE, ADMINISTRATION AND EVALUATION OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Changes in the role of the state in the governance of education

Education in the Czech Republic has a long democratic tradition. Drawing also upon the knowledge and experience of Western democracies, attempts are now being made to renew with this tradition, brutally interrupted by the Nazi occupation in 1939 and the subsequent communist regime in 1948. Annex 5 shows the present structure of the overall system of governance and administration of education in the Czech Republic and the organisations involved. The following fundamental questions have arisen in this connection.

How quickly and effectively can the legacy of the past 50 years be overcome? How can this system be transformed from a centrally administrative-power or political instrument into a democratic, humanistic system, corresponding to new social conditions and needs? How can it be transformed into a system which allows teachers more freedom and makes the schools more democratic and human; a system which extends and diversifies education opportunities as well as the content and methods of education in harmony with the needs of children and young people and the demands of their parents and future employers?

Even if a comprehensive answer to these questions has not yet been formulated, the first legislative measures aimed at answering them were adopted already in 1990 through two amendments to a law passed in 1984. Both amendments opened the way, in many directions, for new developments in Czech education, and led in several ways to a certain relaxation of the centrally administered system. This applies in particular to the schools, which now have far more powers than they did in the past. In contrast, with regard especially to the influence of self-administrative bodies and the power of municipalities and social partners, the centralising tendency was actually strengthened through the introduction of "branch management".

Nevertheless, noticeable changes in the role of the state in education occurred after 1989. Thus, between 1991 and 1994, in connection with the new autonomy of schools and the growth of private schools, a weakening in the governing role of the state can be detected in education generally, and in directive methods of administration in particular. More significant changes in this direction occurred at the end of 1994 when the centre

began to use more indirect methods of governing (for example in the form of grants and various development programmes), and when many important projects were launched, aimed at developing information and evaluation activities and support systems.

Participants in the governance and administration of education, their functions, competencies and inter-relationships

The main actors in the governance and administration of the education system are the directors of schools, the municipalities, the School Offices, the Czech School Inspectorate, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, and other central bodies of the State administration defined by law. Concretely this concerns the Ministry of Economy and Ministry of Agriculture (for apprentice training institutions), the Ministry of Health (for the administration of health service schools) and other ministries (see Annex 5).

Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport

In accordance with the law, the Ministry of Education (which employs approximately 400 people) steers most of the activities of state administration concerning education and creates the conditions for its development. The greater part of the activities of the ministry in the years 1990 to 1994 were directed towards administrative and operational tasks at the expense of conceptual work. There are several advisory boards working under the Ministry of Education and various interest groups, professional associations, teachers' and parents associations, etc., are represented on these boards.

Moreover, at the central level, the Science, Education, Culture and Youth Committee of the Parliament, is quite active in the discussions of new education laws or of amendments to existing laws. Prior to 1994, certain tensions had developed between this Committee (and the Parliament generally) and the Ministry of Education, the Committee criticising the Minister for not proposing a comprehensive concept for the country's future education policy. After the spring of 1994, following the appointment of a new Minister of Education, the relations between the Committee and the ministry have considerably improved.

The Czech School Inspectorate

The School Inspectorate is one of the key organisation under the direct supervision of the Ministry of Education. It provides essential support to the ministry with regard to the control of the practical running of schools. This central management control body is operational in the 86 districts of the Czech Republic and concentrates on activities in pre-school, basic, secondary and post-secondary education. It is expected to monitor education results, levels of professional and pedagogical management, staffing conditions, teaching materials and equipment, efficiency of fund utilisation, and finally, observance of the generally binding regulations. There are currently approximately 400 inspectors, most of whom are newly appointed, covering 15 000 schools, in contrast to some 1 200 in

1989. Thus, some 40 schools and a few additional education institutions are allocated to one inspector.

In general, it can be said that the role of the School Inspectorate is being transformed from its former purely control function to new consultative and evaluation tasks.

Intermediary and local authorities

Following the dissolution of the regional administrative bodies linked to the communist power, new district administrative bodies were set up to forge links between the ministry, municipalities and schools. These are the School Offices, which are directly responsible to the Ministry of Education (and are not self-administered units). They are entrusted predominantly with economic, financial and administrative tasks and, to some extent, with pedagogical issues at the basic school level. Altogether they employ a staff of 2 300, with an average of 30 employees per district.

In contrast to the situation prior to 1989, when the autonomy of education establishments was strictly limited or non-existent, schools have been given a large degree of autonomy implying considerable freedom in economic matters, in those relating to personnel and administration and, to a certain extent, also in pedagogical matters. School directors were given full responsibility not only for the quality and effectiveness of the educational process, but also gradually for the financial management of the school, for appointing and dismissing teachers and for relations with the municipality and the public. All secondary schools acquired the status of independent legal entities and this status was gradually extended to basic schools and other education establishments.

An important component of administration and self-administration in the education system are the municipalities, who are responsible for creating the necessary conditions for compulsory school attendance. They establish, and from an economic point of view, administer pre-school institutions and basic schools. In larger municipalities they ensure that school meals are provided, and that pupils in the lower years are cared for outside of the teaching periods (with considerable financial assistance from the state).

Before 1989, enterprises, factories and co-operatives were important among school-founding bodies, particularly in apprentice training. Macro-social and economic changes which affected a considerable number of businesses led to the gradual disintegration of this network and the responsibility for securing apprentice training gradually passed to different ministries. A large concentration of secondary vocational schools went to the Ministry of Economy (65 per cent of the total number of apprentices in 1995), and the others to the Ministries of Agriculture, Health, and Education. The concept of "state apprentices" emerged, *i.e.* apprentices trained from state funds and not for any particular organisation or enterprise.

It is assumed that in the future, the responsibility for vocational training will be transferred to the Chamber of Commerce and other economic associations, but their organisation and influence are, however, as yet inadequate. A more serious issue is the fact that the participation of the business sector in financing vocational, and especially apprentice training, has not yet been revived. Private apprentice institutions only amount to 12.7 per cent of the total number of secondary vocational schools and are training only

24 172 apprentices, *i.e.* not quite one tenth of the total number. The institution of "state apprentices" thus persists, and important problems such as a rational solution for the financing of apprentice training, or the closing down of the most costly apprentice centres have not been solved.

Problems related to governance, administration and self-administration

The period between 1990 and 1994 was characterised by disagreements between the adherents of the state-oriented concept of education policy and those of the liberal democratic concept. In the field of management, discussions ranged from one extreme to the other. Some supported a full application of market principles to education and its complete decentralisation, others advocated a more or less centralised system. Conflicts arising from these different and often contradictory concepts of education management are, it can be argued, a natural part of the transformation process, reflected also in methods and styles of management from the overwhelmingly autocratic through to those based on co-operation and participation.

This situation was exacerbated in the Czech Republic by the extensive staff changes which occurred at all levels of management between 1990 and 1992, including schools, the Ministry of Education and the Czech School Inspectorate. The latter was filled predominantly by experienced and capable teachers who, however, did not (and mostly still do not) have the necessary training or sufficient management skills.

Problems surrounding central management

Frequent staff changes at the management level of the Ministry of Education (including changes of Minister) have not created conditions conducive to the successful transformation of this ministry. In four years no in-depth analysis of the education system was completed, and the first comprehensive strategy document, *Quality and Accountability* was produced only in October 1994. There was not even a good information system aimed at the general public, particularly with regard to information on available educational supply and the quality of individual schools.

However, radical changes occurred in the Ministry of Education from the middle of 1994 onwards. Over a period of a few months, a careful analysis of the state of the education system was carried out and a programme for its transformation and development was sketched, including an outline of the strategy for carrying it out. At the same time, the new leadership of the ministry was working on a series of practical legislative steps and organisational and personnel measures to implement the transformation programme.

The key question in this respect is whether and to what extent these will succeed in fundamentally changing the concept and style of governance at the central level and elsewhere. It is quite obvious that the current system, which essentially is still a centralised one, conceals a tendency towards directive management, administrative methods and bureaucratisation. This has to be overcome and conditions and mechanisms have to be

created which will induce and help teachers and schools to continually strive for internal change as part of the transformation process.

An important task is the ongoing reform of the School Inspectorate. Its new orientations should enable this institution to monitor not only the results, but also the ongoing work of schools with regard to approved teaching materials and to ensure that the conditions upon which a school was accepted into the network are observed. The most serious of as yet unsolved problems is improving the selection and training of inspectors, as well as the elaboration of evaluation instruments enabling them to assess the activities and results of the work of education establishments.

Problems connected with administration and self-administration at regional and local levels

School Offices in districts, as the middle governing pillar in basic and partly also in secondary education, function on the whole successfully, despite the complicated nature of their task and relationships with other bodies – issues which some of them have not completely resolved. There are, however, considerable differences in the understanding and quality of their activities. As an arm of the Ministry of Education, they are to a certain extent limited by the lack of consultative bodies, or of anyone to check on their activities. The unsolved question and uncertainty concerning the future regional organisation of the country also has a negative effect on the activities of the School Offices.

The autonomy of schools is regarded as an important condition for removing their previous uniformity, for allowing a diversification of the educational supply and a plurality of education programmes and teaching methods. Changes in this area attack the base of centrally directive systems of management and create the space for new forms and methods of regulatory activities.

An entirely new element appearing in the development of schools is their approach to economic and financial problems, marketing and advertising, as well as a growing perception of pupils and parents as customers of the school. However, the general style and methods of internal school management in the majority of establishments have not changed very much. Surveys have shown that many school directors behave as mere administrators, rather than as leaders of a team of partners. In this respect, the School Councils created by the legislative amendment of June 1995 could be instrumental in effecting change. They will function as a partner of the director and may effectively influence basic decisions relating to pedagogical activities and school management. School Councils, due to the nature of their composition, will give school founders, parents and older pupils considerable power and opportunity to contribute to fundamental decisions on school activities.

Evaluation

The transformation of the education system after 1989 demanded that the matter of evaluation be addressed as one of the important instruments of education policy. Selected

bodies, in co-operation with international organisations such as the OECD and the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), began extensive assessment of the state of the education system in the Czech Republic. On the basis of OECD methods, appropriate statistical data were collected and evaluated in "The Czechoslovak Education System in the International Context" (part of the OECD publication *Education at a Glance*, 1995*a*).

Participation in internationally comparative research has been further strengthened since 1994. Within the framework of IEA, a project is currently being carried out on evaluating knowledge in mathematics and natural sciences (TIMMS) and as a Member of the OECD, the Czech Republic is participating in additional international comparative research projects aimed, among other things, at evaluating the effectiveness and efficiency of management in the education system.

The examination and assessment of pupils and the grading of their performance by the teacher was the principal, if not the only means through which education was evaluated in the past. This did not constitute an evaluation in its comprehensive sense, including evaluation of schools and of the education system as a whole. Moreover, even the assessment of individual pupils was focused mainly on factual (encyclopaedic) knowledge, as opposed to skills and the ability to use acquired knowledge. The negative consequences of this approach were revealed by the results of a nation-wide 1994 test designed to assess the general educational level of the pupils in the last year of basic school.

An important indicator of the quality of the education system at secondary level is the ability of the pupils to successfully complete their studies, *i.e.* to pass the *Maturita* (the school-leaving) examination. In 1994, a survey was carried out by the Czech Inspectorate, comparing the levels of *Maturita* among 30 000 pupils at 310 secondary schools of all types. Although the observations were positive in many respects, some substantial variations between different types of schools and between different regions did emerge. Of particular concern was the finding that secondary technical school graduates proved, on average, to have a rate of success (grades at *Maturita* examinations) as much as four times lower than *gymnasia* graduates. It was also found that foreign languages were the *Maturita* subjects which posed the greatest problems.

The data on unsuccessful pupils at each level and type of school is incomplete for the years after 1989-90. The only information available is on the number of pupils repeating years at basic schools for 1989-90 and 1992-93. In the school year 1989-90 the number of pupils repeating a year was 15 300, *i.e.* approximately 11.4 per cent of the total. From the data for 1992-93, when 10.6 per cent of pupils repeated a year, it would appear that the proportion of unsuccessful pupils fell slightly. Additionally, it should be noted that a large part of these unsuccessful pupils complete their basic education through extended school attendance. Also available is data on pupils entering and leaving *gymnasia*. This shows for example, that in 1993-94, approximately 94.3 per cent of pupils successfully completed their fourth year (thus giving a 5.7 per cent non-completion rate).

An extensive evaluation of education results was carried out in 1995 on a sample of 47 state and non-state *gymnasia* with 1 200 pupils, using standardised didactic tests with 328 items and student opinion surveys. The tests revealed relatively large differences in

results between schools, but no significant difference between state and non-state establishments. On average, however, pupils from state *gymnasia* produced slightly better results, while non-state *gymnasia* were found to have a more liberal and less stressful atmosphere.

Finally, an ambitious programme, currently being managed by the Ministry of Education, should be mentioned. It aims at defining a comprehensive approach to, and methods of evaluation for, the Czech education system. A number of concrete steps and measures are in various stages of preparation, which should permit regular evaluation of individual pupils, schools, regions and as well as that of the system as a whole.

The evaluation efforts of the ministry are, however, not aimed only at the education system and its components. Surveys have already been prepared, based on Gallup Institute research models, which will gather information annually on the attitudes and opinions of parents, as well as other segments of the general public, regarding the work of schools and the factors influencing it.

An important step in the evaluation of different schools and of the education system as a whole is the 1995 amendment to the Education Act which obliges all schools and education establishments to produce and publish an annual report. This will enable their activities to be controlled "from above" by governing bodies, and "from below" by pupils and their parents. These reports will also provide the public with useful information on the availability and quality of schools. The amendment further obliges the ministry to present an annual report to the Parliament on the state of education in the Czech Republic.

As already mentioned, the School Inspectorate is undergoing fundamental changes, both in function and goals, and in working methods and forms. The evaluation of schools and of their programmes has become one of its main functions.

A new phenomenon concerning evaluation in the Czech Republic is the growing demand for the evaluated subjects to play a more meaningful role in this process. External controls need to be, and in some of the "better" schools already are, complemented by internal controls, by self-evaluation. At present, these are emerging as spontaneous initiatives in a small number of schools, where various forms of pedagogical innovations and movements are taking place.

Chapter 6

NEW APPROACHES TO EDUCATIONAL FINANCING

The main changes and new principles in the financing of education

After 1989, fundamental alterations were made to the financing of education. The first of these concerned the system of financing as a whole. As previously mentioned, in contrast to the preceding period, a system of "branch management" has been implemented through Act 564-1990, whereby the Ministry of Education distributes the financial resources to the district School Offices and, through these, directly to the schools and other education establishments for which these offices are administratively responsible.

Similarly, other departments (such as the Ministries of Economy, Agriculture, Health, etc. – see Annex 5) also receive funds from the state budget and distribute them to the education establishments which they administer, while rectors of higher education institutions distribute the funds they receive to individual faculties.

The other fundamental alteration was the introduction of formula financing,[1] which replaced the former incremental method based on indicators from the preceding year. Under this system, the number of pupils (students) considerably influences the extent of the financial resources received. Costs per pupil are calculated according to the level and type of school, and an index which serves to compensate for disadvantages. For example, there is a higher allowance for pupils with disabilities, for safeguarding the existence of small village schools, for compensating for adverse environmental or climatic conditions, etc.

Developments and structure of costs and expenditure on education

Society's expenditure on education in the Czech Republic[2] comprises funds from the state budget on the one hand, and from municipal budgets on the other. Gross expenditure on education has risen (at current prices) from CZK 22.3 billion in 1989 to CZK 71.8 billion in 1995. Most of it (CZK 70.6 billion) is made up of public funds (over 89 per cent). In 1995, CZK 56.9 billion (about 80 per cent of the total expenditure on education) came from the state budget and 13.7 billion from the budget of municipalities (see Table 6.1). More than 85 per cent of the state budget come from the Ministry of

Table 6.1. **Gross expenditure on education according to sources of financing and their share in GDP**

In billion of CZK at current prices

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
GDP in current prices	524.5	567.3	716.6	791.0	910.6	1 037.5	1 205.0
GDP in 1984 prices	509.9	503.7	432.1	404.5	400.7	411.2	431.1
Total of State budget	155.9	163.6	240.1	253.1	356.9	380.1	432.7
Public expenditure on education	21.1	23.5	31.1	38.3	52.1	61.7	70.6
Share in GDP in %	4.0	4.1	4.3	4.8	5.7	5.9	5.9
Share in State budget in %	13.5	14.4	13.0	15.1	14.6	16.2	16.3
of which:							
Expenditure from State budget	4.0	4.5	16.4	28.3	40.9	49.6	56.9
Including health and social care	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	6.8	9.1	10.5
Expenditure from municipal budgets	17.1	19.0	14.7	10.0	11.2	12.1	13.7

n.a.: Not applicable

Source: Czech Statistical Office, 1996

Education, 11 per cent from the Ministry of Economy and the remaining 4 per cent from other ministries.

A more detailed summary of expenditure on education between 1989 and 1995 is shown in Table 6.2. It is evident from this table that expenditure on education from public funds has grown nominally over the five years since 1989 by 234 per cent (in current prices), with the highest increase (36 per cent) between 1992 and 1993, and the lowest (14.2 per cent), between 1993 and 1994. Expenditure on education as a share of

Table 6.2. **Development of expenditure on education within the competencies of the Ministry of Education**

In billion of CZK at current prices

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Total of State budget	155.9	163.6	240.1	253.1	356.9	380.1	432.7
of which:							
Expenditure on education from Chapter 333	4.0	4.5	16.4	28.3	41.1	43.3	49.3
Share of State budget (in %)	2.6	2.8	6.8	11.2	11.5	11.4	11.4
of which:							
Non-investment	3.6	3.9	15.6	26.4	38.4	39.7	45.2
Investment	0.4	0.6	0.8	1.9	2.7	3.6	4.1
Including higher education	2.4	2.8	3.3	3.6	5.8	7.4	9.4

1. Expenditure from the state budget on education mentioned in Table 6.1 includes expenditure of all ministries administering education, whereas in Table 6.2, it concerns only expenditure of the Ministry of Education. Hence, some differences in figures between the two tables.

Source: Czech Statistical Office, 1996

Table 6.3. **Total expenditure according to levels and types of school**

In billion of CZK[1]

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	Index (1989 = 100)
Total exp. on education	22.2	25.4	33.8	40.7	54.2	62.9	71.8	323
of which:								
Kindergartens	1.9	2.0	2.6	3.3	4.8	5.5	6.5	342
Basic schools	6.0	6.4	7.9	10.4	15.5	18.2	20.9	348
Secondary vocational schools								
Gymnasia	0.6	0.7	1.0	1.2	2.1	3.0	3.9	650
Secondary technical schools	1.2	1.3	2.0	2.2	3.9	6.1	6.7	558
Secondary vocational schools[2]	1.6	3.1	5.1	5.7	8.0	8.8	9.8	612
Special schools	0.6	0.7	0.9	1.1	2.0	2.4	3.0	500
Higher education[3]	3.5	4.0	4.6	4.7	6.6	8.5	9.4	268

1. Data given at the current rate should of course be adjusted in accordance with inflation which, measured against the consumer price index, amounts (in 1995) to more than 273 per cent (1989 = 100). The consumer price index is not the most suitable instrument for measuring inflation in education expenditure because it does not reflect the structure of the needs of schools and education establishments. However, the Czech Statistical Office has yet to produce a more suitable price index.
2. Including expenditure of companies.
3. Including student residences and refectories.

Source: Czech Statistical Office, 1996.

the GDP has considerably increased, although the GDP itself has fallen since 1989 (see Chapter 2). It can generally be said that in 1994, there was a considerable deceleration in the dynamics of the previous years, which were marked by an increase in expenditure on education exceeding even the growth coefficient of the budget as a whole.

There has been a general decline (in constant prices) of investment outlays over the last few years. Consequently, the Parliament approved a programme for improving the quality of technical facilities in education, for which funds to the extent of CZK 3 billion from the National Property Fund will be made available in 1995 and 1996.

A large component (some 70 per cent in 1993 and 75 per cent in 1995) of non-investment expenditure on education are the salaries of teachers and other school employees, which have been kept approximately in line with the inflation rate and with salaries in other sectors (but not in all), to the opposite of the portion of total non-investment expenditure destined for other non-investment costs (energy, water, sewage, telecommunications, services, etc.), which has steadily decreased.

The financial situation and the difficulties of Czech education are heavily influenced by an extremely rapid growth of the number of schools, classes, teachers and pupils in all types of education establishments, but particularly in secondary schools. For example, the number of *gymnasia* and secondary technical schools, including the swift rise in the number of private schools, has more than doubled between 1989-90 and 1994-95, while at the same time, the number of pupils per class and the average number of pupils per teacher fell considerably. Other factors at work include the steady increase in the number

of "state apprentices", the extension in the length of studies at secondary technical schools and the significant growth in post-secondary courses, the reopening of a large number of schools with small classes in remote districts (and a steady decline in their pupil numbers), the considerable increase in the costs of health and social insurance for employees, etc.

The rapid increase in expenditure on secondary and particularly on secondary vocational and technical education naturally had an effect on the financing of the other education sectors which, in a sense, "paid for" this development. This especially affected expenditure on higher education and on its research base, which failed even to increase in line with inflation (Table 6.3).

Diversification of financial resources in education

The first step in the diversification of financing in education was of course the removal of the state monopoly in the provision of education. This also means that the state no longer has a monopoly on the financing of education either, even if its obligation to guarantee the right to education remains beyond doubt. In addition to the state, municipalities and, unfortunately to a very small extent, employers have entered into the financing of educational institutions, as well as various foundations and the parents of pupils, particularly those in non-state schools.

As far as students contributing to post-secondary (including higher) education is concerned, political bodies are now turning their attention to the social implications of these measures. The proposal to introduce fees in higher education has, as already mentioned, been rejected by Parliament in December 1995, partly at least because it was considered that this proposal was not sufficiently linked with social policy measures, in order to avoid any serious social disadvantages for individuals of lower social strata.

Included in the measures to alleviate budgetary problems in education is an increased participation of students or their families in the costs of special interest activities or items of a social nature (*e.g.* school meals), which until now have been covered entirely from the state budget.

In accordance with Act 564-1990, municipalities contribute a certain amount to financing pre-school institutions and basic schools (approximately one fifth of the total expenditure from public funds on education). For a long time, however, their possibilities were limited, so that two years ago state subsidies amounted to more than 90 per cent of the income of municipal budgets. Currently, following changes in the tax system, local authorities are covering approximately 75 per cent of their expenditure from their own income. This opens the way, especially with regard to larger municipalities, for more independence of local financing, which in turn, will increase the possibility of better meeting local education needs.

Fundamental changes have also occurred in the financing of apprentice training. This was previously covered by two sources: the general education and the theoretical part of the training were financed by the state, and practical training was sponsored by potential employers, *i.e.* industrial and agricultural concerns. Along with the changes in

their status and economic situation, the majority of companies have lost interest in financing apprentices. On the whole (at least until 1994 or 1995), employers have considered it to be more advantageous to select their work force from the labour market and, rather than training their own workers, have preferred to invest in production funds and the capital market.

The present situation, *i.e.* the state financing not only the theoretical, but also the practical training of the large majority of apprentices, known as "state apprentices", is exceptionally costly and ineffective. In fact, the existence of, and the undoubted bias towards, state apprentices are not only costly but also impede the sound development of apprentice training, employment policy and general entrepreneurial activities.

Financing and the autonomy of schools

The fact that today decisions are taken in schools, or at least jointly with schools, is certainly a most positive phenomenon. In particular, schools which are managing themselves independently are aiming at greater cost effectiveness of their activities and seeking additional financial resources to develop and improve their functioning.

However, these changes are making considerable demands on the time and qualifications of their directors. This is especially so in the smaller schools and institutions which do not have staff for their economic-administrative agenda and where the directors have to do the work, usually at the expense of their pedagogical commitments. It is no coincidence that only a small number of basic schools and even a smaller number of pre-school institutions have become legal entities with the appropriate level of responsibility and competencies. The reason for this, however, is also that some municipalities were not very willing to provide schools with greater independence.

The status of private schools in this respect is entirely different. In the large majority of cases they have unrestricted decision-making powers within the framework of the law. Nevertheless, they are significantly limited by their financial resources and therefore the question of financing through state subsidies is extremely important for them. Over the past few years, the generous state contribution was practically comparable to state-school subsidies, and because of the large state support education became a relatively lucrative branch of private enterprise. As of the school year 1995-96, a clearer distinction between non-state and state education establishments exists. The former will continue to receive 90 per cent of the normative in the case of basic and special schools but less for other non-state establishments which might see a drop in subsidies to as little as 60 per cent.

These measures are not only dictated by the difficult financial situation in the education sector, but also are a reaction to the emergence of some costly measures, such as the increase in the length of courses, the continual creation of new types of follow-up and post-secondary courses, etc. Developments in the sector until now have shown that the spontaneous creation of new educational opportunities, influenced by the demand for education and by institutional interests, is very demanding on the state economy and that it will be necessary to use indirect mechanisms for steering this process in order that it corresponds to the general trends of economic and social development.

Chapter 7

CONCLUSIONS AND KEY ISSUES

Towards a new balance

In each of the previous chapters, the hitherto-unresolved problems of the Czech education system have been discussed and, occasionally, suggestions for solution presented. These problems shall not therefore be recapitulated in this chapter. Rather, a number of key issues which they have in common and which require fairly urgent answers will be identified.

One of these issues, underlying to a considerable extent all others, is the role of the state in the development and steering of the education system. Linked to it is the role of other components and actors of the system: municipalities, districts, or even larger territorial units, enterprises, individual schools, their directors and teachers, interest groups, etc.

In the Czech Republic, as everywhere else, this issue touches upon all aspects of education: the structural arrangement of the system, curriculum development, quality control, responsibility for evaluation, teacher training, financing and management of education, etc. In all these areas, the situation today is rather different than at the onset, and during the first years, of the transition period.

Between 1989 and 1994, the development of education was marked by the general relaxing, opening and liberalisation of the system, leaving as much room as possible to local and individual initiatives, the relatively small involvement of the state in areas such as steering the development of institutional structures (see the rapid and almost boundless growth of private schools and secondary technical schools, which no-one anticipated), or encouraging the participation of enterprises in apprentice and adult training.

It was, and is, possible to consider this early development as truly necessary not only from the point of view of the prevailing liberal policies of the government and its stress on free-market values, but also, if not primarily, from a certain historical and sociological perspective. After more than 40 years of rigid centralism and state regulation covering all aspects of social and economic development, it was more than desirable to create a situation allowing for a reversal of the acquired habits of, and attitudes towards, acting only on orders "from above", in short to create a situation leading to the fostering of individual responsibility. The generally uninhibited and undirected development of the

education system was to a large extent a condition and possibly the only instrument for contributing to this sociological reversal in a decisive manner.

After four to five years of the transition process the situation has changed for a number of reasons, and the issue of the state's role in education poses itself differently today than at the beginning and in the first phase of the process.

Firstly, it is apparent that certain centralising traits persist and that merely spontaneous developments and purely market mechanisms have not overcome them.

Secondly, the spontaneous development of the Czech education system, although it has been, and remains a positive phenomenon, has also led to certain negative aspects and especially to a lack of equilibrium in the development of various sectors of education, the consequences of which may in the future (and already do today) have an unfavourable impact on the long-term development of education and, in immediate terms, also on its financing.

Thirdly, the spontaneity of developments has had an influence only on certain areas of the education system, and little or none on some others which are nevertheless extremely important for the development of human resources. This concerns, for example, a more active role on the part of enterprises in this development.

Finally, it is difficult to imagine that the mere spontaneity of development will compensate by itself sooner or later for the afore-mentioned deficiencies.

In a certain sense, it can be said that some of these deficiencies are the result of the persistent influence of old habits and approaches, but many others result, in a sense, from the successes of the transition process. Hence this fundamental question: what is and what should be the role of the state, and of other actors in this new, more advanced phase of transition?

In the discussion, not only *what* is to be done, but above all *how* it is to be done, is relevant. For instance, the issue of whether nationwide standards and a certain basic national curriculum should exist is on the whole clear today, but how this should be reached is an open question: according to what criteria, who is to be responsible for, and participate in the relevant definitions and how can they be translated into practice for teachers and schools, etc.?

A return to centralism and a restriction in the free choice of educational path, the reinstitution of a state monopoly in education, or a break with the general principles of a market economy are all out of the question for the Czech Republic. At issue are the creation of conditions, stimuli and mechanisms necessary for a balanced development of the system and for a new balance between the role of the state and the role of other actors.

Six more concrete issues will be posed in connection with this and as a conclusion to this report.

The state, municipalities and other territorial units

The Czech Republic has indisputably passed through an extensive process of decentralisation. This process still has far to go and can be expected to continue. But at the

same time, as has been repeatedly stressed in this report, certain centralising traits persist or have risen anew.

A majority of responsibilities concerning education rest with the ministry, which deals with education issues on its own or through its subordinate bodies (School Offices in the districts). Apart from the School Offices, the municipalities are the only autonomous self-administering units at the moment, but they have relatively limited competencies. These competencies almost exclusively relate to kindergartens and basic schools and concern mainly the maintenance of school buildings, school canteens, etc. This has not led to a great degree of participation of the municipalities in the development and operation of schools.

The legal amendment of June 1995 instituting School Councils, in which the municipalities are to be represented, is most likely an important step in increasing this participation. However, it is unclear how the process of decentralisation is to evolve from then on. What are to be the competencies of the municipalities in questions of school management and what should or must remain in the hands of the state (for instance quality control, the definition of educational standards or even the base wage and status of teachers)? Are the basic schools, including their budgets, to come under the competency of the municipalities, and which nationwide norms are still necessary?

Even less clear and less resolved is the issue of higher level administration units (regions) and their possible competencies in educational matters. So far these units, or regions, have not been created and it is expected that no decision will be taken in this respect until sometime after the June 1996 elections. Should they be created, whether in the short or longer term, would it not be appropriate to consider their possible competencies in matters of schooling as early as today? For example, should they have direct ties to secondary schools or should this competency remain, as is the case now, an almost exclusive matter of the ministries (at least as far as state schools are concerned)?

As a last question in this respect, what should be the relationship of the state, municipalities or other territorial units to private schools (including their financing)?

Opening schools to society

On several occasions in this report, continuing insufficient links of the education system with society in the broad sense of the term were mentioned. Particularly disturbing are the weak ties to enterprises in the area of technical or vocational schools and adult education. What can and should central authorities do in this respect?

An obvious answer is to introduce fiscal measures to encourage enterprises to participate in education, thus changing the present situation whereby identical treatment is accorded to firms not expending any effort or means towards the education of their employees and to those firms involved in training or education activities. An important question thus concerns the optimal, politically acceptable fiscal measures which should be taken (tax reliefs and other advantages benefiting firms supporting education and training, or special taxes for those contributing to the training of their employees). Is it possible to draw from foreign experiences, for example the 1971 French law, or various systems of "educational leave" in this matter?

The problem of opening schools to society not only involves enterprises. In essence, it is necessary to expand the participation of the most varied segments of society in the development and operation of schools (municipalities, parents, professional associations) and to develop different forms of this participation (representation in school management, joint projects, participation in teaching, etc.). Some of these forms already exist in the Czech Republic. However, in many cases a certain amount of state support is necessary, at least in the opening phase. It is necessary to define which concrete steps must be undertaken and which mechanisms must created for this purpose, whether by law or through other means.

On the other hand, it also becomes necessary to stimulate schools in opening themselves to external participation and influences. And here, the same question arises: what are the most suitable stimuli which can be applied without being considered an unnecessary restriction on the autonomy of schools?

School autonomy, its scope and limits

The autonomy which schools obtained in 1989 is indisputably one of the most important and probably also one of the most revolutionary aspects of the whole transformation of the Czech education system. It is a radical change not only in relation to the previous 42 years of communism, but also in comparison with the more or less centralist system of the First Republic (1918-1938) and with Austro-Hungarian traditions prior to 1918. Thus it comes as no surprise that this autonomy is the subject of numerous disputes and discussions, that its scope and limits are not yet clearly defined, and mainly that large differences persist between what the laws and decrees allow and the existing practice.

A whole range of concrete questions present themselves in this respect, for example:

- To what extent is the existing system, according to which the Ministry of Education fixes 70 per cent of the curriculum and the schools 30 per cent, satisfactory, and to what extent should it possibly be changed, considering especially the fact that this rule is often purely theoretical, particularly in the case of basic schools, many of which do not use the 30 per cent space which is open to them?
- Are certain changes necessary in relation with the competencies of both the Ministry of Education and the schools in so far as appointing, status, professional growth and teacher remuneration are concerned?
- Is the existing system of the normative financing of schools per pupil satisfactory and in what fundamental way should it possibly be modified (if at all)?
- How should and can the state support the self-evaluation activities of schools and, more generally, which competencies in matters pertaining to evaluation should or must remain in the realm of central bodies, and which are to be part of the schools' autonomy? In this respect, the question of the *Maturita* examination (secondary school-leaving certificate) is especially critical. Are its content, criteria and execution to be, as until now, the main concern of school directors, or is, in this respect, a certain strengthening of the influence of the centre desirable, above all in the interest of better nationwide comparability and also of the future international recognition of Czech school-leaving certificate examinations?

- In what other ways and by what other mechanisms should, or can, the responsible, autonomous, and innovative behaviour of schools be stimulated or supported, especially where it has not yet been sufficiently applied? In this respect, what are the main barriers and how can they be removed or weakened in practical terms?

Vocational education and training

VOTEC represents without any doubt a key component of human resources development in the broadest sense of the term, and one which is of strategic importance for the country's overall transformation process.

As has been stressed at various points of this report, a number of significant, sometimes even extreme phenomena have appeared in the development of Czech vocational education and training:

- The rapid development of secondary technical schools (SOSs), including non-state, in contrast to the slower development of general secondary education. In itself this rapid development of SOSs testifies to the fact that in the Czech Republic, as opposed to the majority of Western countries, but also to Poland, this sector enjoys a relatively high prestige and corresponds to a long tradition.
- The rapid decline in participation of enterprises in apprentice training and the compensatory rise of a system of state apprenticeships.
- The expansion, perhaps excessive, of new study and teaching fields and specialisations, although, in many cases, a certain "generalisation of curricula" has occurred, *i.e.* the introduction into technical education of subjects which are new and beyond the narrow specialisations concerned (foreign languages, computer science, marketing, etc.).
- The rise of new institutional forms of VOTEC, in particular of integrated secondary schools and higher professional schools.
- The division of competencies concerning VOTEC between the Ministry of Education, mainly responsible for secondary technical schools, and the Ministry of Economy, predominantly responsible for secondary vocational schools, thereby leading to some inter-sectoral problems.

Some of these phenomena are undoubtedly positive; on the other hand, some do, or may have negative consequences. Major questions arising in relation to this issue are, for example, the following:

- Is the development to date of secondary technical schools to be regulated, so that a certain rise in the share of pupils in general secondary education takes place; or should the main issue be the strengthening of general education elements at the secondary technical schools? By what means should it be reached (*e.g.* through the development of hybrid forms such as the technical *lyceum*, or through the expansion of higher professional schools)?
- How should the problem of over-specialisation in VOTEC be addressed? In this respect, is central state involvement necessary (*e.g.* through the accreditation system or even through financial mechanisms), or is it more suitable to leave

development to the initiative of the schools or, possibly, to the indirect pressure of enterprises and the labour market for broader qualifications?

- In so far as the curriculum of VOTEC is concerned, the fundamental question remains as to what should be determined by the state and how (*e.g.* the setting of standards, minimal professional qualifications, etc.), and what should be left to the decisions of schools and their immediate partners?
- Is it possible and desirable to develop the prognosis of future qualification needs of the labour market (naturally, without re-instituting any form of imperative planning mechanism)? If so, what in this respect can, and should, be initiated by the central bodies and what can, and should, remain the responsibility of schools, Chambers of Commerce, employer unions, etc.? Is it advisable to preserve the existing dualism of ministerial responsibility for VOTEC, mainly concerning the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Economy, or is the entire responsibility to be re-transferred to the Ministry of Education? If this does not happen, what mechanisms and methods of inter-sectoral co-operation should eventually be employed?

Development of innovative approaches

This issue concerns both teachers and school directors as well as the indirect role of the state. Two facts are important. On the one hand, it is indisputable that teachers and school directors were since 1989, and still are, the main actors of the renewal and transformation of education. On the other hand, it is also clear that this process has yet to reach the majority of schools and pupils.

It is not crucial whether 80 per cent or 90 per cent of schools or teachers are concerned, as has been sometimes estimated (see Chapter 2), because it is clear (and perhaps even unavoidable) that in most cases, overcoming the legacy of acquired habits and approaches is a long and slow process. However, here again the question is whether the state can influence teachers and school directors to be "more innovative", and if so, what conditions should be created to increase their innovative capacity and also responsibility. In no case can innovative behaviour and greater responsibility be ordered or imposed, but only stimulated, for the most part indirectly. In this respect, over the past years, the Ministry of Education has already undertaken or supported a whole range of important steps (*e.g.* performance-related supplements for teachers, development programmes, special grants, or managerial courses for school directors).

The first question is therefore which of these steps are to be expanded or, possibly in the light of experience, modified?

- What other mechanisms or stimuli should be employed (*e.g.* in the area of in-service teacher training, in the form of visits to especially innovative schools or intensive seminars)?
- How can a new or improved information system be helpful in this respect?
- How, in addition to the Ministry of Education, can the municipalities and other actors of the education system support the innovative capacity of teachers and schools?

Towards a more effective support system

Most of the answers and solutions to the above questions and, particularly to the issue of a new balance between the roles of the state and of other actors of the education system, imply a search for appropriate tools with which the system can be steered without reverting to the old centralism. In general, these tools can be grouped under the heading of "support system", which comprises in particular educational information, educational research, educational guidance, special support to, and development of, educational innovation, support of in-service teacher training and of education management training.

Most of these components of a support system already exist or are being developed in the Czech Republic. The important point is whether they are properly linked to, and used by, the various decision-making centres, both at the central and school levels; the main question, then, is what can and should be done in this respect:

- How can schools be motivated to make a better use of the existing support services?
- How can educational research be made more relevant to actual policy-making?
- What should be the division of roles between state-sponsored institutions and private bodies regarding the development of the support system?
- How should faculties of education and universities generally be induced to greater involvement in strengthening the support systems, especially regarding policy-relevant educational research and in-service teacher training?

Questions to the examiners

The following questions, addressed to the OECD examiners, summarise the conclusions and the questions presented in the first part of this chapter.

- What appraisal and which recommendations can be made concerning the division of competencies between the state (central bodies), municipalities and other territorial units in the area of schooling and education? What are the deficiencies of the existing situation?
- If it is true that schools in the Czech Republic do not have sufficient links with the economic sector and society in general, what can be judged to be the main causes of this deficiency and which measures can be recommended for closer links to develop? What is the responsibility of the state in this area (the Ministry of Education and the government more generally) and what is, and can, remain the responsibility of the municipalities and schools, enterprises and other actors of the education system?
- Through which measures should the autonomy of schools in the Czech Republic either be expanded or restricted? Which mechanisms or resources can be recommended to develop autonomous behaviour on the part of schools? What is the role

of state and schools in the content, criteria and organisation of *Maturita* examinations?

- What are the main problems, as well as the positive and negative features of the Czech VOTEC system? Do the rapid development of secondary technical schools and their strong specialising tendencies call for certain corrective measures? Which fiscal or other measures can be recommended for the purpose of increasing the participation of enterprises in the development of VOTEC? Which division of competencies in the definition and development of VOTEC curricula could be recommended to be apportioned between the state, municipalities and districts, schools and enterprises? What is the assessment of the existing placement of VOTEC under two ministries?
- What are the resources and mechanisms through which the innovative capacity and approaches of teachers and school directors could be supported? Can the state (nationwide measures) directly or indirectly exert influence at all in this area? Can in-service training of teachers play an important role here, and if so in what form?
- How should the Czech support system be developed and, more particularly, how can it be more effectively used by various decision-making bodies?

In conclusion, what are the areas in which the Czech education system and its actors can make the most of co-operation with the OECD; in which respects and by which methods could or should this co-operation be prioritised?

NOTES

1. If the qualification of the candidate is not sufficient, a contract is concluded for only two years conditioned by the completion of the necessary education. However, it depends entirely on the will of the employer whether a contract will be concluded, which increases the feeling of insecurity of teachers.

2. By the governmental Decree No. 141-1995, the starting salaries of teachers were abolished. Immediately upon hiring, basic school teachers receive the ninth salary category, secondary school teachers the tenth category, and, according to length of creditable practice, they are classified into ten salary levels.

3. Namely preparing lessons, evaluating pupils or students, consulting and guidance, supervision, informing parents on the progress of their children, attending meetings, managing departments, libraries, collections, etc.

4. The teaching load is reduced by the number of hours required for activities such as administration, class tutoring (one to two hours a week), and others, such as one to three hours for educational guidance, one hour for activities at district level, etc. For school directors this represents two to 26 hours a week depending on the type, level and size of the school. In higher education the teaching loads of different categories of teachers are not defined.

5. The decree was issued at a time when the children of the baby-boom generation were overfilling classes to unmanageable sizes of up to 40 students. The maximum size for a kindergarten class was set at 20.

6. Under the former system, education was governed predominantly through district and regional national committees, thus by bodies of the general state administration, governed completely by the centre, *i.e.* by the Ministry of Interior and the Communist Party. The term "branch management" means transferring all questions relating to education to the Ministry of Education and other competent Ministries, *e.g.* Health, Economy, Agriculture, etc.

7. The Czech term corresponding to the concept of "formula financing" is "normative financing", whereby "normative" implies a specific amount per pupil or student which the school (university) receives from the public budget. Throughout this chapter and the report, the Czech-language-based terms "normative" and "normative financing" shall be used, although they are not usual (and are possibly even misleading) in English.

8. Different countries include different items in their expenditure on education. In the Czech Republic, expenditure on education includes, among others, contributions to school meals, accommodation in boarding schools, as well as funds for certain activities for children in their free time – contributions to child and youth centres, etc. Since 1993, expenditure for social and health insurance of educational staff, although listed separately, has also been included.

9. This concerns not only fees at non-state schools, but also charges at pre-school institutions and out-of-school centres (up to 30 per cent of the costs), contributions to school meals and other activities, etc. From statistics on family budgets it can be estimated that the overall household expenditure on kindergartens, basic and secondary schools and higher education institutions, was approximately CZK 500 million in 1993 and rose to more than CZK 850 million in 1994.

Annex I Basic data on the Czech Republic

Population (1994): 10 322 000

Surface: 78 864 sq. km

Population density: 131 per sq. km

Distribution by nationality in % (1991):

Czech	94.9
Slovak	3.0
Polish	0.6
German	0.5
Romanies	0.3
Ukrainian	0.07
Russian	0.04
Ruthenian	0.02
Other	0.1
Unidentified	0.07

Birth rate:	**1980**	**1992**	**1995**
	14.9	11.8	9.2

Birth rate per woman of childbearing age:	**1989**	**1994**
	1.89	1.44

Death rate:	**1980**	**1992**	**1995**
	13.1	11.7	11.2

Average life expectancy:	**1989**	**1993**	**1994**
Men	67.1	69.3	69.5
Women	75.4	76.3	76.5

Age structure of the population (31.12.1992) in %:	**1992**	**1995**
0-14 years old	19.99	18.33
15-24	15.86	16.61
25-59	46.18	47.04
60+	7.97	18.00

Source: Yearbooks of the Czech Statistical Office.

Economy

Table 1. **Development of principal economic indicators**

	1991	1992	1993	1994
GDP in current prices (in billions of CZK)	716.6	791.0	910.6	1 037.5
Annual changes of GDP in constant prices (in %)	–14.2	–7.1	–0.3	3.0
Industrial production	–24.4	–13.7	–5.3	2.5
Balance of state budget to GDP	–2.1	0.2	0.1	0.1
Inflation	56.6	11.0	20.8	10.0
Unemployment	4.1	2.6	3.5	3.2
Gross debt per head of population (mil. US$)	0.6	0.6	0.8	0.8

Source: Czech Statistical Office, 1995

Table 2. **Development of employment according to sectors of the national economy**[1]

In thousands

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Employees total	5 433	5 351	5 059	4 927	4 848	4 885
Primary sector	826	801	651	491	451	338
In %	15.2	14.9	13.3	10.3	9.5	6.9
Secondary sector	2 343	2 290	2 048	2 005	1 945	2 064
In %	43.1	42.5	41.9	42.1	40.8	42.2
Tertiary sector	2 264	2 296	2 190	2 270	2 363	2 481
In %	41.7	42.6	44.8	47.6	49.7	50.8

1 The entry shown in this table for agriculture differs from the information in Table 3 as it also includes connected services (trade, repairs, etc.)

Source: Czech Statistical Office, 1995

Table 3. **Development of employment by sector**

In per cent

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Industry	39.1	37.8	38.5	36.5	35.3	33.0
Agriculture, hunting, forestry	11.6	11.8	10.0	8.6	6.8	6.9
Construction	7.3	7.5	8.0	8.3	9.3	9.1
Car sales and repairs	9.7	9.8	9.6	11.0	12.6	14.4
Transport and communication	6.5	6.9	7.3	7.4	7.9	7.2
Banking and insurance	0.5	0.5	0.7	1.0	1.3	1.6
Public administration, defence	1.7	1.8	2.0	2.5	2.7	3.0
Education	5.7	5.9	6.4	6.6	6.7	6.6
Health, veterinary and social work	5.1	5.2	5.3	5.4	5.4	5.3
Other public and social services (including culture)	12.8	12.6	12.2	12.5	11.9	12.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Signposts of Social and Economic Development in the Czech Republic, Czech Statistical Office, 1994

Table 4. **Development of employment in the private sector**

Per cent of total employment

1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
1.3	7.0	18.8	31.1	46.9	55.0	64.0

Source: Czech Statistical Office, 1995.

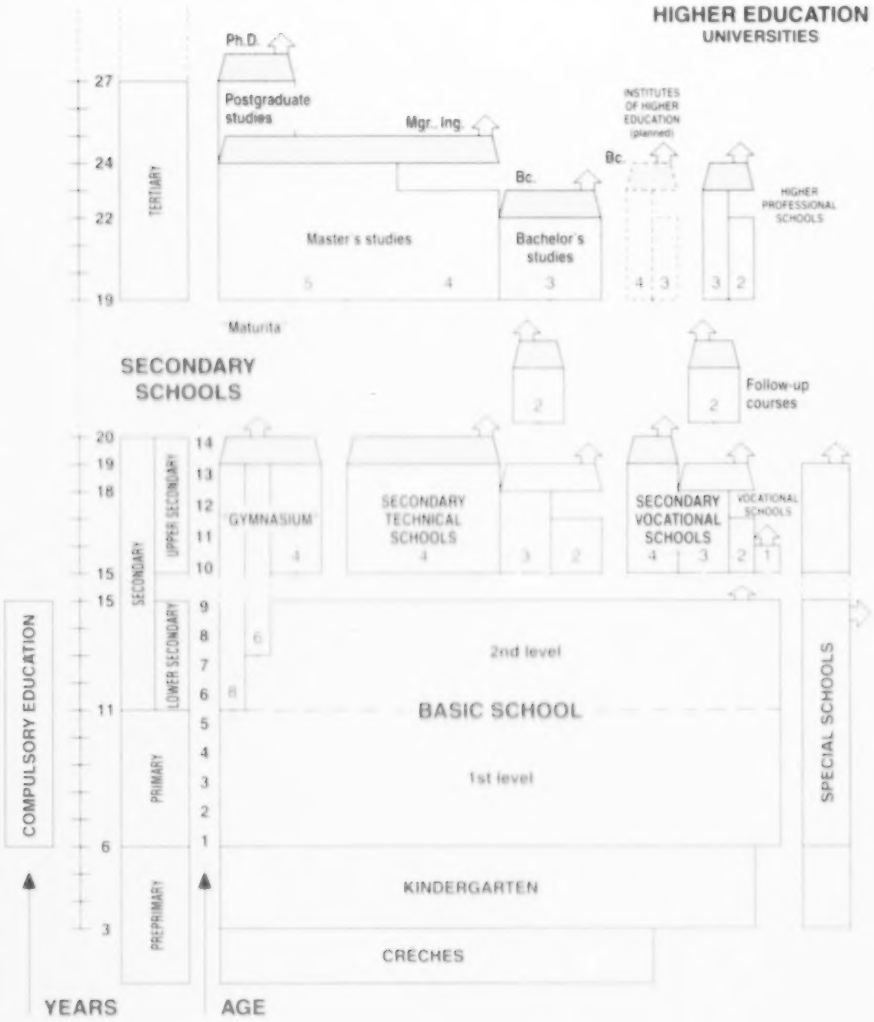
Constitutional, political and administrative systems of the Czech Republic

The Czech Republic is a parliamentary democracy with, at the head, a President elected by Parliament, a single legislative assembly and a national government (a second legislative assembly foreseen in the Constitution – the Senate – is expected to be established and elected in late 1996). The powers of the President are mainly representative, except in the areas of defence and foreign affairs, where his influence is exercised jointly with the government. The President can also oppose the adoption of a law, in which case the Parliament can overrule him by adopting it by a majority of all members of Parliament.

The country is divided into 86 districts which are administrative but not self-administered units. To date (middle of 1996), the only self-administered (elected) units are the municipalities, numbering approximately 6 000. No other intermediary self-administered units between the municipalities and the national government and Parliament exist at the moment. Their creation and competencies (*i.e.* a division of the country into a certain number of more or less autonomous regions) have been under discussion since 1990 and it is expected that a decision will be reached in this respect following the June 1996 legislative election.

Annex 2 Education system of the Czech Republic

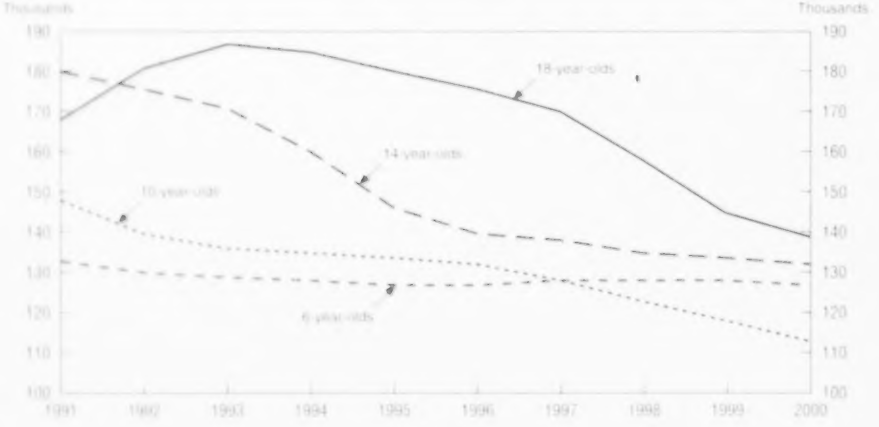
Expected situation under amendment Law No. 138-1995 of the Code – valid 1996-97



Source: Education Policy Centre

Annex 3 The influence of demographic developments on education

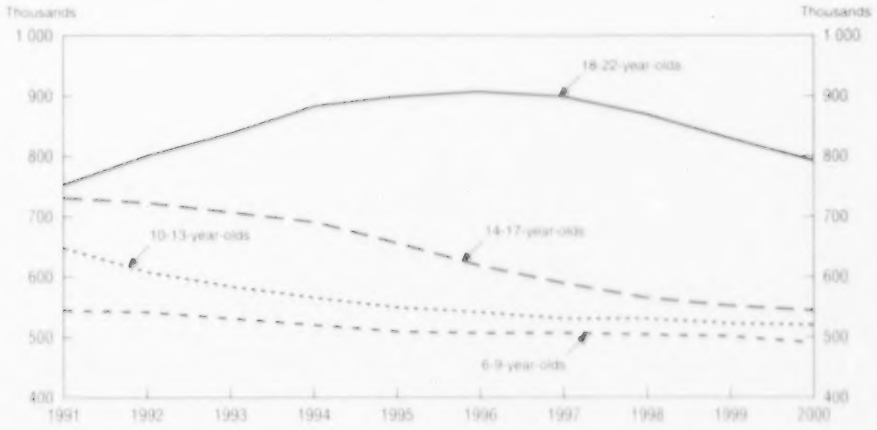
Figure 3.a Entrance age cohorts at different levels of education, 1991-2000
Ages 6, 10, 14 and 18



Source: Czech Statistical Office

Figure 3.b **Age cohorts at different levels of education, 1991-2000**

Ages 6-9, 10-13, 14-17 and 18-22



Source Czech Statistical Office

Annex 4. Curricula

Table 1. **Basic school: lower level**[1]

Number of lessons

	Grade				
	1	2	3	4	5
Czech language and literature	9	10	10	7 (8)	7 (8)
Foreign language				3	3
Elementary knowledge	2	2	3	–	–
Elementary social studies			–	3	3
Basic science			–		
Mathematics	4	5	5	5 (4)	5 (4)
Physical education	3-2	3-2	3-2	3-2	3-2
Music[2]	3	3	3	4	4
Art[2]					
Total no. of lessons per week	21-20	23-22	24-23	25-24	25-24
Optional subjects	1	1	1	1	1

1. Curriculum for ages 6-10, valid from 1991.
2. The number of lessons for each subject is determined by the director of the school.

Source: Ministry of Education.

Table 2. **Basic school: upper level**[1]

Number of lessons

	Grade				
	5	6	7	8	9
Czech language and literature	5-4	5-6	5-4	5-4	5-4
Foreign language	3	3	3	3	3
Mathematics	5-4	5-4	5-4	5-4	5-4
Civics		1	1	1	1
Family education	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)
Physical education	3-2	3-2	3-2	3-2	3-2
Geography	2				
History	2				
Biology	2				
Music	1	–	–	–	–
Art	2				
Physics					
Chemistry		–			
Elective subjects					
Practical subjects	2	2	–	–	–
Total no. of lessons per week	27-24	29-28	31-29	31-29	31-29
Optional subjects	2	2	2	2	2

1. Curriculum for ages 10-14, valid from 1991.

The number of lessons for each subject is determined by the director of the school.

Source: Ministry of Education.

Table 3. **8-year *Gymnasia*[1]**

Number of hours

	Grade							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Czech language and literature	5	4	4	3	3	3	3	3
Foreign language 1	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Foreign language 2	–	R	R	R	3	3	3	3
Latin	–	–	–	R	R	R	R	R
Civil education								
Rudiments of the social sciences	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
History	2	2	2	2	2	2	R	R
Geography	2	2	2	2	2	2	R	R
Mathematics	5	5	4	3	3	3	3	3
Geometry			–	R	R	R	R	R
Physics	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	R
Chemistry	–	2	2	2	2	2	2	R
Biology-geology	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	R
Informatics and computer technology		–	2	R	R	R	R	R
Aesthetics	3	3	2	2	2	2	R	R
Physical education	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Optional subject 1				R	R	R	2	2
Optional subject 2						R	2	2
Optional subject 3	–						R	2
Optional subject 4								R
Overall prescribed hours	28	28	28	24	27	27	26	22
"Free" hours	2	2	3	7	4	4	5	9
Total	30	30	31	31	31	31	31	31

1. – As of 1 September 1995.

Note: The letter "R" in the table indicates that the subject is included in that particular school year at the discretion of the school director, who also decides on the number of hours to allocate to the subject from the "free" hours available.

Source: Ministry of Education.

Annex 5 **Management/administration of the Czech education system**

Source: Education Policy Centre

Annex 6. Organisation of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport

Minister's cabinet
Minister
Independent personnel division
Archive division internal affairs and defence
Ministerial secretariat
Departmental control office
Independent accounting division
Department for economic administration
Basic and secondary education group
Deputy Minister
Department for organisation and development of education system
Department for foreign language instruction and international co-operation
Department for basic education and out-of-school education
Department for secondary and upper professionnal education
Department for special education
Department for arts education
Higher education group
Deputy Minister
Senior Director of Science
Department for higher education
Department for science and technology development
Department for international co-operation in the field of science and technology development
Department for organisational administration
Department for lifelong education
Department for foreign relations
Economics group
1st Deputy Minister
Senior Director for Education Financing
Financial and budgetary department
Department of investment and material-technical services
Department of salaries and employment legislation
Department of strategy and analysis
Department of accounting and analysis
Legal department
Youth and sports group
Deputy Minister
Sports department
Youth department
Regional education administration group
Senior Director
Department for administration of education in Bohemia
Department for administration of education in Moravia

Source: Ministry of Education

Table 1. **Summary of "normatives" 1992 to 1995**

In CZK per pupil

	1992	1993		1994		1995		Growth 1992-95 1992 = 100
	Total	Total	*Of which* Salaries	Total	*Of which* Salaries	Total	*Of which* Salaries	
Kindergarten founded by municipalities	4 447	n.a.	n.a.	9 902	7 123	11 046	7 949	248.4
Basic schools founded by municipalities	3 709	6 946	4 721	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1-4 years up to 50 pupils	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	14 087	9 504	14 899	10 099	n.a.
1-4 years from 51 to 150 pupils	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	10 676	7 028	11 174	7 574	n.a.
1-9 years from 51 to 150 pupils	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	13 515	9 105	14 477	9 813	n.a.
1-9 years from 151 to 250 pupils	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	12 070	8 133	12 769	8 655	n.a.
1-9 years above 250 pupils	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	9 191	6 200	9 703	6 577	n.a.
Gymnasia	9 490	13 794	6 021	17 094	9 044	20 120	10 368	212.0
Commercial academies	8 900	14 581	6 655	17 094	9 044	19 742	10 173	221.8
Home economics schools	n.a.	14 581	6 655	17 094	9 044	19 604	10 102	n.a.
Secondary pedagogical schools	8 035	14 353	7 126	17 574	9 044	20 555	10 173	255.8
Secondary librarian schools	8 035	14 353	7 126	17 094	9 044	19 742	10 173	245.7
Secondary industrial schools	11 125	17 598	7 736	21 781	10 906	24 472	11 635	220.0
Industrial art schools	n.a.	30 838	15 103	42 395	15 847	36 436	15 893	n.a.
Secondary agricultural schools	14 833	24 485	10 686	29 449	13 290	29 679	14 110	200.1
Secondary forestry schools	14 833	24 485	10 686	26 410	13 290	29 679	14 110	200.1
Performing arts schools and dance conservatories	19 777	38 057	21 183	40 200	25 699	46 050	28 576	232.8

n.a. Not applicable.
Source: Ministry of Education.

Annex 8 Public opinion and education

Table 1. **Public opinion poll on the standard of education in basic schools**

In per cent

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Very good	2	2	3	4	6
Quite good	37	41	38	46	51
Quite bad	35	30	31	27	21
Very bad	8	6	6	5	3
Undecided	18	21	22	18	19

Source: Public Opinion Research Institute

Table 2. **Public opinion poll on the government's handling of different problems, April 1995**

Percentage

	Very good	Quite good	Quite bad	Very bad
Economic reform	7	45	33	7
Relations with Slovakia	5	46	28	7
Unemployment	4	40	27	13
Education	1	31	43	14
Regional administration	2	29	26	8
Law-making	1	24	39	17
Standard of living	1	24	50	22
Environment	0	24	51	20
Co-existence with Romanies	1	22	37	21
Social security	1	22	45	29
Health	0	20	41	26
Agriculture	0	17	50	28
Housing	0	15	46	30
Organised crime, mafia	0	12	35	43
Crime, personal safety	0	11	45	42
Corruption and embezzlement	1	5	42	47

Note: The total of each row subtracted from 100 gives the percentage of "don't knows".
Source: Public Opinion Research Institute

Table 3. **Public opinion poll on the urgency of solving certain problems**

Percentage

	Very urgent	Quite urgent	Not very urgent	Not at all urgent
Crime, personal safety	76	21	2	0
Corruption and embezzlement	73	23	3	0
Organised crime, mafia	66	26	5	1
Social security	60	32	6	1
Health	56	38	5	1
Standard of living	54	37	7	1
Environment	52	38	7	1
Law-making	48	35	7	1
Housing	43	41	10	2
Economic reform	41	44	8	1
Agriculture	41	41	9	1
Unemployment	37	40	17	4
Education	36	45	12	5
Co-existence with Romanies	22	33	28	12
Refugees in the Czech Rep.	15	35	28	11
Relations with Slovakia	10	32	36	16
Regional administration reform	9	20	36	25

Note: The total of each row subtracted from 100 gives the percentage of "don't knows".
Source: Public Opinion Research Institute.

Part Two

EXAMINERS' REPORT

INTRODUCTION

> *...Our first wish is for full power of development into full humanity, not of one particular person or a few or even many, but of* ***every single individual****, young and old, rich and poor, noble and ignoble, men and women – in a word, of every human being born on Earth, with the ultimate aim of providing education to the entire human race regardless of age, class, sex and nationality.*
>
> *Secondly, our wish is that every human being should be rightly developed and perfectly educated not in any limited sense but in every respect that makes for the perfection of human nature...* (Comenius, *Pampaedia or Universal Education*).

The present review is not the first concerning education policy to be carried out in the Czech Republic. In 1991-92, the then Czech and Slovak Federal Republic invited the OECD to undertake the first education policy review in a non-member, central and eastern European country (CEEC), the focus of which was higher education. Reporting back to the Education Committee some two years after it was completed, Czech officials gave a sober, critical reflection on the remaining gaps in the Czech higher education system and on areas resistant to available and adopted policy approaches, as well as on progress, innovations and achievements already attained in the sector. Now, some two years after the follow-up on the first review, an opportunity has been provided to explore other aspects of the education system and develop a better understanding of the changing context and on-going education policy debate in the Czech Republic.

In a wider political and economic context, the Czech government has been concerned during the period since 1989 with important constitutional, foreign policy and macro-economic issues accompanying the establishment of a fully independent state. The political separation of the Czech and Slovak Republics was also carried out peacefully and successfully. From an international perspective, these efforts are now bearing fruit: the Czech Republic is the first of the economies in transition to have acceded to OECD membership, and with serious discussions on European Union (EU) membership under way, the stage is set for a full return of the country to the international and European scene.

With regard to the education sector, much has changed since OECD examiners visited the country in 1991. New legislation was passed, formula financing was introduced for primary and secondary schools, curricular reform is under way and vigorous

attempts are being made to decentralise education governance and management. Speed and scope characterise the education initiatives undertaken by Czech authorities. The progress realised to date is remarkable, by any standard.

Nonetheless, the reform is far from complete. In the Czech Republic, as in other societies in transition, new initiatives have generated their own problems and often coexist with elements of former administrative patterns and school practices. Furthermore, the public debate, while dominated by a strong will to break with the past, is much less clear about which changes should be effected. Paradoxically, there is interest in some quarters towards a return to concepts and approaches of education which were in favour more than 50 years ago, before the country became isolated from the non-Soviet world and thus disassociated from education developments in free-market, democratic countries. These ambiguities and uncertainties may be characteristic of a society in transition; the debate has, however, the advantage of revealing in a clear way the fundamental choices for school policy in the Czech Republic.

The OECD examiners benefited from various policy papers prepared by Czech authorities. For example, a candid and critical appraisal of the state of primary and secondary education, as well as the main directions for policy in this area were set out in *Quality and Accountability: The Programme of Development of the Education System in the Czech Republic* (published by the Ministry of Education in October 1994). Another statement on *The Teacher*, prepared by a consultative group to the Ministry of Education and issued in December 1995, provides a comprehensive and coherent framework for teacher policies covering recruitment, training, career paths, pay, professional development and teacher roles and responsibilities. Of great value were also the facts and analyses contained in the Background Report, *Transforming Education*, the summary of which forms Part One of this publication. The quality, thoroughness, and critical approach of these documents are noteworthy.

The present review is concerned primarily with school policy, that is, policy relating to primary and secondary education (general and vocational) and, to a lesser extent, to the continuing learning of adults. Mention has already been made of the 1992 review of higher education and of its follow-up in 1994. The recommendations of that review have had an important impact on policy development and remain valid. Other issues, such as those relating to policies for young people and adults who could benefit from "second chance" options and for special education, could only be touched upon within the time frame and terms of reference agreed for the review.

Throughout the report, the key growth points for education development are stressed and suggestions for change are made. The examiners have chosen to develop for consideration by the Czech authorities only a limited number of key recommendations. These are presented in Chapter 8. As a set, and in general, the recommendations arise from the examiners' perception of a new role for education in the economic development and improved well-being of the Czech society. In this respect, their intent is that the report become part of the process of bringing policy thinking in the Czech Republic into the wider OECD dialogue on education issues.

The individual recommendations are concrete, focusing intentionally on specific institutional or structural measures which could be implemented. This emphasis reflects

the examiners' view that the ongoing policy discussions on schooling objectives and processes, as expressed in the policy statements of the Ministry of Education, must eventually address key institutional and structural weaknesses if the progress achieved to date is to be sustained and further improvements realised.

Concrete recommendations have the value of setting out clearly the implications in terms of the roles, responsibilities and work of the various partners – government, education officials, school administrators, teachers, employers, the community, parents and students among them. Nonetheless, the Czech authorities will be in the best position to adapt or re-frame these in the light of dynamic economic, political and social developments. Moreover, it must be recognised that there is no best approach to address the problems and challenges identified, as evidenced by the wide range of contexts and policy frameworks found among OECD countries. This range of approaches and experiences is referred to at different points in the report, and in presenting the recommendations in Chapter 8, attention is drawn to country experiences and perspectives raised by delegates at the review meeting convened in Prague.

The team carried out its two-week mission to the Czech Republic in September 1995. Gracious and generous hospitality was extended to the examiners throughout their stay, with formal meetings and informal occasions both serving to deepen their understanding and appreciation of the Czech people, their cultural and technological achievements and their contributions to intellectual life over a long history.

The members of the review team express their gratitude to all the Czech colleagues who contributed to make their work productive, stimulating and pleasant. In their appreciation are included all those who were interviewed during the two-week mission: school and district School Office directors, representatives from municipalities and research bodies, and officials of the Ministry of Education, as well as of other ministries and affiliated agencies. The reviewers were assisted by colleagues in the Education Policy Centre of the Faculty of Education of Charles University, who organised the visit and were commissioned by the Ministry of Education to prepare the *Background Report*. Finally, thanks are extended to the Minister of Education, for requesting that the OECD undertake this work and, in co-operation with the European Union PHARE/RES programme, for providing the necessary resources to carry it out.

Chapter 1

HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT IN A TRANSITION ECONOMY

Six years have elapsed since the "velvet revolution" of November 1989. These have been busy years for Czech economic and social reformers, and the achievements are impressive. The OECD's Employment, Labour and Social Affairs Committee observed in its review of the labour market (OECD, 1995*b*):

> "The Czech Republic is often heralded as a success story among the transition economies. Not only has this country managed to maintain relatively stable macro-economic conditions – with the lowest inflation rates in the group of Visegrad countries and a balanced budget – but it has also made considerable progress in structural transformation. Most notably, it has developed a private sector which accounts for the largest share of GDP among transition economies and has successfully reoriented exports towards Western countries. All this has happened with little unemployment and no visible signs of widespread poverty or economic hardship."

These achievements have been realised despite the break-up of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic at the end of 1992 and the price shock introduced with the value-added tax at the beginning of 1993.

The decision of the Czech authorities to adopt convertibility of the *Koruna* in September 1995 and to accede to OECD Membership in December of the same year attests to the real progress towards macro-economic stability. A recent article in the popular media puts the achievements in perspective: "(...) the Czechs are closer than several members of the European Union to meeting the economic targets laid down in the Maastricht treaty as a precondition for entry to a European monetary union" (*The Economist*, 22 October 1995). The political climate has also evolved considerably. The stability of parliamentary democracy has been confirmed by two rounds of elections which, until May 1996, provided a stable majority to the present conservative government. Efforts to build new institutions in many spheres of political and social life are being made, but progress towards real decentralisation of the state administration and the development of a civic society is slow. The heritage of the communist regime can still occasionally be felt under the form of inertia, an absence of initiative without instructions from "above" and in some behaviour patterns.

Main features of the transition

The same observers who are keen to draw a flattering record of past achievements seldom fail to remind the international community that much transformation is still ahead. Briefly, the positive aspects of the Czech economic performance can be characterised as follows:

- With an inflation rate of 9 per cent in 1995, near price stability has been achieved; the remaining controls are in rents, public utilities and transport prices.
- The fiscal budget was balanced from 1992 to 1994, and this positive record continued in 1995.
- The reorientation of foreign trade from East to West has made spectacular progress, with the EU (and Germany, particularly) as the main trading partner; this shift was accompanied by a growth in exports towards Western countries. The tourist boom accounted significantly for the healthy position of the balance of payments.
- The level of indebtedness is low and there are no constraints on external payments; furthermore, the Czech Republic has benefited from a significant flow of foreign direct investment.
- The privatisation programme, carried out in two waves, was vast and efficient and, according to the latest estimates, close to 80 per cent of all economic assets should be in private hands by the end of 1996.
- The programme contributed to the development of a thriving small-business service sector where an estimated one million jobs have been created.
- Wages have been kept under tight control since 1991, a policy which contributed to keeping inflation at moderate levels; in 1995 all wage controls were abolished.
- Unemployment is remarkably low by any standard, a situation which is usually explained by a combination of factors including the remarkable wage moderation displayed by Czech workers and a significant decline in labour force participation among women and older workers (see OECD, 1995*b*).
- The combination of moderate wages and low unemployment yields a situation which is unusual among CEECs, in that there is a rather egalitarian income distribution with few visible signs of widespread poverty.

The less positive characteristics of the Czech economic performance during the transition are the following:

- Despite the recovery observed in 1994, the first year of economic growth since the political change, the GDP remains at 20 per cent below its level of 1989.
- The restructuring of industry represents a formidable challenge, not yet successfully addressed by the privatisation process. There is significant evidence of government intervention to save large companies from bankruptcy, of labour hoarding among big companies, of workers changing nothing in their daily routine and of managers adopting a "wait and see" attitude towards their new, often absent owners (usually investment privatisation funds or banks where the influence of the state is very strong, with limited experience of innovative business strategies).

- The transition process was accompanied by a significant decline in labour productivity and a fall in real wages. The low wage level acts as an incentive for large companies to keep surplus labour and for new, small companies to resort to labour-intensive methods, keeping capital investment down.
- Despite this policy of low real wages partly designed to preserve the competitive advantage accruing to Czech exporters on account of low and declining labour costs, Czech goods experience difficulties in penetrating foreign markets. As a result of excessive reliance on raw materials and chemicals at the expense of machinery and transport equipment, the Czech export structure remains heavily based on unsophisticated products. In 1995, the external trade deficit was large, but the balance of payments was close to equilibrium due largely to revenues generated from tourism.
- The informal economy played an important role in absorbing workers made redundant in the transition process; it developed strongly in the service sector and in the border areas with Germany.
- The poor functioning of the health sector also needs to be addressed urgently, as it affects many people individually, and impairs the overall quality of human resources.

These less positive trends have led to some questioning of the so-called "Czech employment miracle". Quite aside from the considerable variations between Prague, where unemployment is virtually non-existent, and northern Moravia and Bohemia where it is highest, doubts are expressed as to whether the conditions permitting such low levels of unemployment can be maintained in the future. Can (and should) labour force participation be allowed to decline further? Can (and should) wages be kept down much longer? Do the negative effects of full employment (sluggish growth, low labour productivity and disincentive to the modernisation of industry) outweigh its positive impact on the Czech social fabric?

Behind this questioning lies another, broader, issue pertaining to the overall approach to be used in furthering the transition and strengthening economic development. Past achievements and present performance are beyond dispute. What is at issue is whether the present strategy can and should continue in the future.

Moving beyond the transition

The above considerations point to the need for some fresh thinking on development strategies and human resources policies for the Czech economy and society. In delineating the contours of such a policy framework, great care must be exercised to preserve the existing tacit, but fragile, "social contract" between government and the society. The essence of this social contract is that Czech workers accept relatively low wages in exchange for high employment and low cost of living.

Some factors, most of which are beyond the realm of government policy, may actually force a reappraisal of the present development strategy. One factor is the steep

demographic decline presently underway. According to the latest demographic statistics, the number of young people aged 14 is expected to decline from 180 000 to 130 000 between 1991 and 2001. Eventually, this dramatic decline will be reflected in the number of new entrants into the labour force and clash with the existing labour intensive, low-productivity techniques used in the economy.

The compromise over wages will also be more difficult to maintain as the Czech economy is drawn nearer to its high-wage, European neighbours. The huge wage differential between the Czech Republic and Germany, characterised after the 1989 "velvet revolution" as the "Singapore at our door" syndrome, may become untenable in a rapidly integrating European labour market. There is likely to be growing pressure on the part of both German and Czech workers, the former stressing unfair competition and the latter struggling for alignment with Western European wage rates.

Sluggish economic growth may not be a viable solution for very long, in a country which has, after the initial economic contraction, still to reach pre-1989 GDP levels. Expanding domestic consumption may be worth considering, since both domestic investment and exports are faced with severe constraints, while foreign investment can only have a marginal effect on growth.

Still, the main conclusion to draw is that there will be limited scope in the medium to long term to build upon an economic development strategy relying on cheap labour, low productivity, specialisation in unsophisticated products, over-reliance on foreign direct investment in subsidiary companies, and a booming small business and informal sector. An alternative growth strategy stressing specialisation in new products and markets, product quality and up-to-date technologies would better position the Czech economy in an environment characterised by a shortage of labour. It would also be more in line with the sophisticated traditions of Czech industry. Such a growth strategy would lead gradually to improvement in labour productivity and better wages.

The development of this alternative growth pattern and the conditions for its full implementation are beyond the scope of this review. The main implication is that this growth strategy is built on the development of the country's human resources.

Implications for human resources

Three important factors of human resources development play a major role in promoting economic and social growth: an increase in the general education level of the work force (thus improving the stock of human capital), a re-orientation of VOTEC, and a re-vitalisation of continuing education and training.

The stock of human capital

As demonstrated in other OECD countries, improvement in labour productivity depends on an overall increase in the general education level of the labour force.

Evidence of increasing economic returns to investment in education recorded in the Czech Republic since 1989 provides support for this view. Education has begun to be considered not only as "social capital", but also as a good with economic value on the market.

In terms of participation in formal education, the Czech Republic fares rather well when compared with other OECD countries. However, while basic education and vocational and technical education are well developed, participation in general secondary education and higher education is clearly below the OECD average. The OECD *Review of Higher Education in the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic* led to recommendations to increase the breadth of, and participation in, higher education.

The case for general secondary education (*gymnasium*) requires further explanation. Under the communist regime, stress was put on the quantitative development of the "third tier" of secondary education, the vocational schools, which was given the mission to train the numerous manual workers required by a socialist economy with a strong industrial base. The "second tier", technical secondary schools, had a good reputation in a society where technical qualifications, although very specialised, were also in high demand. Thus, general secondary education suffered from the traditional preference given to technical tracks leading to narrowly-defined occupations in the Taylorist and bureaucratic work organisation found in state enterprises. General secondary education was not considered essential for the economy and student flows never exceeded what was strictly necessary to meet the needs for high level scientific and technical manpower and those of the *intelligentsia*.

This conservative attitude towards general secondary education has in part survived, albeit for different reasons. It is still considered as an "élite" track which should be restricted to the very small proportion of the age group with above-average intellectual abilities (approximately 15 per cent). Highly selective entry into higher education also contributes to the preference still given by many young people and their parents to the technical and vocational tracks of secondary education, as the latter are considered as "safe strategies" in terms of labour market prospects when compared to the more "risky" route of education at a *gymnasium* aimed solely at the university. Both within government circles and the general public, some view any increase in numbers of students following general secondary education in *gymnasia* as leading to a decrease in quality. This view, mistaken in the opinion of the reviewers, stands in sharp contrast with the stance taken in many OECD countries where the democratisation of secondary education has been pursued actively in the last two decades and used as a lever to democratise societies and increase the numbers of students continuing their studies at the tertiary level.

In summary, then, the new development strategy would call for an increase in the education level of the labour force (*i.e.* the overall stock of human capital) through increased enrolment in general secondary education, and as a corollary, in higher education.

Vocational and technical education and training

VOTEC is at the centre of any strategy aimed at boosting labour productivity. In contrast with most OECD countries, VOTEC enjoys a high prestige in the Czech Republic. It will be important to exploit this advantage as part of any reform.

In this respect, the heritage from the past is well known. The Czech economy was characterised by a dominance of heavy and basic industry (mining, steel, chemicals), a considerable machine industry, but few consumer-goods industries and no service sector. The level of technology was relatively low, reflecting the standards of the 1960s. Production was organised in large, state-owned, vertically-structured monopolies, which usually dominated employment in single towns or regions.

The division of labour inside enterprises was high, especially on the work-floor, with many hierarchical levels and a large overhead staff. Work organisation was Taylorist and bureaucratic, although in reality, skilled workers learned to be flexible in order to deal with the effects of constant shortages and breakdowns.

Wages were relatively low, but more importantly, wage differentiation between occupational categories was low as well. Moreover, in the wage hierarchy, workers' occupations were favoured, through all kinds of bonuses and compensations, at the expense of white-collar jobs and the so-called "intellectual" jobs of academics. The wage system was organised along the principle of seniority, which put young people, even as they became increasingly better educated, in a disadvantaged position.

The present VOTEC system in the Czech Republic has inherited an orientation and a structure reflecting the economic and social system which it served prior to 1989. In 1989, enrolment in "short" vocational courses leading to skilled-worker certificates accounted for more than half of all students entering post-compulsory (upper secondary) education; training provision for industrial or technical occupations was favoured at the expense of training for tertiary or service occupations; curricula were narrowly differentiated in too many specialisations; few opportunities were opened for horizontal or vertical mobility among study lines; many vocational schools belonged to state enterprises and provided only the study lines needed by their owner.

The demands placed upon VOTEC by an employment system functioning in a market economy with private enterprises competing on the basis of costs and quality of goods and services are different. VOTEC has to shift from the logic of preparing young people for guaranteed and stable employment in state enterprises to one of helping them to cope with adaptation to technological change, job shifts and new, emerging opportunities in private, mostly medium-sized and small companies.

A number of changes are already visible in this respect in this transition period: a decreasing share of enrolment in "short" vocational courses (from 56 per cent to 41 per cent of all entrants into post-compulsory education); the rising share of enrolment in technical secondary schools leading to the secondary school-leaving diploma (*Maturita*) and post-secondary qualifications; a shift in programmes towards commerce and service occupations; and efforts to broaden curricula and qualifications in an attempt to provide students with a base on which to respond to unforeseen "change" in the broadest sense.

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New demands for management training are also being met, in response to major changes in the work organisation and sizes of enterprises.

These shifts point in the right direction, and they should be supported. A detailed analysis of what remains to be done in this area is provided in Chapter 6. This includes, among others, efforts to boost existing provision in areas of emerging needs (especially service occupations), to broaden curricula which remain too narrowly defined, and to organise and strengthen appropriate relationships between education establishments at all levels and employers.

Continuing education and training

The acceleration of industry restructuring, which is the cornerstone of a policy framework aimed at increasing labour productivity and improving the quality of goods and services, calls for initiatives promoting continuing education and training. Such initiatives would help encourage much needed geographical and industrial labour mobility among workers, and so contribute to reduce regional pockets of unemployment. They could also encourage managers of unprofitable companies to restructure and workers to seize new opportunities on the job market.

In addition to these economic aspects, participation in continuing education and training also has important favourable social consequences. The danger inherent to narrowly developed transition policies is that groups of workers are made redundant, because they are ageing, or working in a depressed sector or area, or again equipped with outdated skills. Considerations of equity, as well as efficiency, would call for broader efforts to provide these workers with a "second chance". Continuing education and training, seen in a perspective of lifelong learning, is the way to achieve this.

The reviewers are aware that in the first years of the transition, Czech policy makers have not viewed continuing education and training as a policy priority. This low priority can be accounted for by the labour-market conditions persisting until now, including low unemployment, as a consequence of incomplete industry restructuring and labour hoarding on the part of companies with a management clinging to survival strategies. However, the new growth strategy will require greater attention to labour-market flexibility, and the engagement of all parties – employers and providers as well as workers – if modernisation and needed structural change are to be realised. Any adopted policy approach should aim to encourage "voluntary" participation from all sides.

The human and resource development (HRD) strategy

Taken together, these factors imply much stronger links, and therefore greater consistency, between economic, employment and education policies. A HRD policy framework, therefore, would figure prominently in the overall development strategy. Such links exist and have evolved in other OECD countries, where education and training relate to, and influence, development in employment and the labour market, the organisation of work and economic policy, as well as overall development and well-being in societies. The goal to be achieved in this respect is an education system which, in a

framework of lifelong learning, will contribute to securing for the Czech Republic the production levels, living standards, democratic processes and social cohesion sought in other OECD countries.

Investing in human resources: budgetary implications for education and training

In 1995, the Czech Republic devoted close to 6 per cent of its GDP to education, a proportion which is well in line with the OECD average. This figure does not include private expenditure on education but neither does it take into account the recent substantial salary increases granted to teachers. On the whole, the country is not under-spending on education in relative terms. The problem is that the level of GDP remains low and increases only slowly. Approximately 80 per cent of public expenditure on education comes from the state and 20 per cent from municipalities. Close to 15 per cent of the state budget is devoted to education.

Costs and use of personnel

In all countries, the largest share of expenditure in education is for personnel salaries. Despite their high level of initial training, Czech teachers are among the lowest-paid state employees. With a 16.7 per cent salary increase in 1995 and a planned 20 per cent increase in 1996, the government seems to have taken steps to improve the relative salaries of teachers and other education personnel. This is welcomed, as little progress can be achieved without a motivated teaching force willing to devote time and energy in improving the learning of young people, rather than on extra work to supplement a low salary.

It is expected that new teacher policy will go further, particularly with regard to the management and deployment of the teaching force. Class size is declining in the Czech Republic and pupil-teacher ratios compare favourably with those observed in other countries. Further reductions may be expected as the full effect of the demographic decline is felt throughout secondary education. From a strictly educational perspective, this development favours improved conditions for teaching and learning in schools and classrooms.

Nonetheless, there are financial limits to low pupil-teacher ratios; furthermore, the trade-off between teacher numbers and unit costs (largely salaries) cannot be avoided. In this respect, the reviewers believe that there is room for a more effective deployment of the teaching force. There is evidence of spare capacity and under-used staff in basic schools and in many secondary technical schools (especially in those providing training for industrial or technical occupations), not to mention declining enrolment in vocational schools. Greater opportunity for redeployment will emerge over the next few years, as teachers taking retirement can be "replaced" by newly qualified graduates in needed fields, geographic regions, types of schools, and education levels.

Another element in teacher policy should address career "profiles" in teaching. A better deployed teaching force would enable the Ministry of Education to establish, in

partnership with the unions, new career paths providing adequate financial rewards for seniority, responsibility and excellence.

What is proposed here is to shift away from an education system staffed with numerous, under-used and lowly paid teachers to a system employing fewer, more versatile and better paid personnel. This pattern is similar to what was suggested in terms of a possible new growth strategy for the Czech economy, in which improved labour productivity and higher wages would be stressed.

It is recognised that these suggestions cannot be implemented in the near term. The intent of the reviewers is to sketch prospective teacher-policy elements within which government policy towards teachers can develop. Chapter 5 provides more details on this topic. This also carries implications for education administration and governance, since these policy changes and the new roles they set for the actors of the education process require greater partnership and a strategic leadership role for the Ministry. School directors are ill-prepared to manage such a redeployment; they would, in any event, need to work with various "partners" at, and above, the level of the school. The role of the Ministry of Education is vital in this respect: to ensure agreement with, and understanding of the framework, to put in place the incentives and signals for all of the partners and to contribute to the development and support of the infrastructure (see Chapter 6). Clear signals and incentives to act in this direction should be given by the Ministry to all interested parties.

Rationalisation

According to Czech officials, there seems to be little room for reallocation of resources within the education budget. However, this situation is not unique to the Czech Republic. Of greater concern is a policy framework which entails additional, largely uncontrolled outlays of scarce public resources. Three specific points can be identified in this area: the fast and, so far unchecked, increase in the number of secondary schools, the development of the multi-year (and more expensive) *gymnasium*, and the extension of private secondary education (possibly to be extended to higher education). These have already had a visible impact on the allocation of resources among the various levels of education: expenditure on secondary education increased by a factor of five between 1989 and 1995 (twice and half the rate of growth of the expenditure on higher education – this expenditure being itself low by OECD standards). Furthermore, they contribute to a general over-capacity of the system, especially at the secondary level. At present, the education administration appears ill-equipped to deal with these developments or, more generally, with needed rationalisation of provision at the primary and secondary levels.

Mobilising additional finance for continuing education and training

The Czech Republic currently lacks a comprehensive system of continuing education and training, responsive to the needs of restructuring in the economy. The Ministry of Education is not active in this area. The Ministry of Labour, through its network of Public Employment Services (PES), organises or procures training courses for unem-

ployed adults. However, the number of adult participants in programmes targeted to the unemployed is low compared to the numbers of school-leavers in job-subsidy programmes. Czech companies also make some use of another PES scheme which subsidises employer-sponsored training of employed workers, in order to facilitate restructuring and prevent redundancy. Overall, however, retraining sponsored by PES is less common in the Czech Republic than in most OECD Member countries (OECD, 1995*b*).

Various private associations are active in this education sector. Adult courses do exist in fields such as commerce, management, marketing, law, computers and foreign languages, but they develop largely as a response to a demand from individuals changing jobs, rather than as a response to companies investing in training to support restructuring. There seems to be only limited demand for retraining emanating from Czech companies, many of which are still struggling for survival after privatisation. Low wages and labour costs also account for the lack of company demand for retraining. When cheap labour is available, companies are not encouraged to redesign or enrich jobs and pay higher wages.

In the opinion of the examiners, a country engaged in such an ambitious and far-reaching process of economic and social transformation – where about half of the labour force has changed jobs during the first two years of the transition – should devote more attention to the retraining and continuing education of adults. Efforts in this area were recently encouraged by a grant from the EU PHARE programme to finance continuing training in management. With five million ECU available until 1996 to establish a national training fund, a good start is being made.

However, further national initiatives are going to be needed to build on these externally-financed and more targeted labour market efforts. For example, steps should be taken to encourage Czech companies to invest in the training of their employees as part of their efforts to develop new products, find new markets and restructure their modes of operations. An initiative aimed at encouraging them to include human resource strategies in their business plans would help foster new attitudes, away from a defensive or survival approach to restructuring and towards a more pro-active approach.

OECD countries have developed different means to stimulate and steer provision of continuing education and training. The reviewers propose an initiative with two elements, legal and financial. Firstly, a new regulatory framework for continuing education and training should be established as part of a comprehensive system of lifelong learning. Such a framework should be kept as flexible as possible to enable public and private providers, both for-profit and non-profit, to take an active role and to allow the widest scope for participation by adult learners. Secondly, a preferential tax treatment should be granted to enterprises willing to support the retraining of their employees, possibly in the form of a new levy exemption scheme.

The second element of the proposal, a levy exemption, is aimed at stimulating the involvement of enterprises. The examiners are, nonetheless, aware of the reluctance of the Ministry of Finance to provide tax exemptions for companies at a time when the tax reforms of 1993 are not yet fully settled. For their part, education authorities have pointed out that the lack of a regulatory framework was a paramount obstacle. While there is a need for such a framework, the examiners do not fully share this view, if only because continuing education and training should not be devolved to any single ministry, or even

to government bodies alone (for example, to the Ministry of Education in partnership with other ministries such as Labour, Economy, etc.). In their opinion, this is an area where market forces can and should play a key role, reinforced by measures to stimulate the demand. The long-term objective is to encourage private companies to become involved in human resources development for their employees. This is an area where, after the collapse of arrangements existing prior to 1989, involvement of employers has been lacking.

In general with regard to the "proper" division of labour between the public and private sectors (or, for that matter, between the "state" and the "market") in education, the examiners believe that the government, and primarily the Ministry of Education should assume a leading role in steering and monitoring the system. Private enterprises have a role to play as partners in all levels of education and training, but they should be encouraged to take initiative in the development, support or provision of continuing education and training in line with their own needs and interests and within a broader, flexible overall framework.

Chapter 2

STRUCTURING THE EDUCATION SYSTEM FOR EQUITY

The heritage from the past

The main characteristics of the education system in the former Czechoslovakia were those that could be found in all communist countries at the time: after kindergarten education, much of which was provided by public enterprises, there was a common basic school of considerable length, which in most cases amounted to the period of compulsory education. In the course of time, it had in several countries been extended to nine or even ten years. In Czechoslovakia, compulsory education was extended to ten years but the length of basic school was shortened to eight years.

The common basic school was in a way the core of communist education systems. It embodied in full the principle of a large common core of instruction for all in the same school, which served to confirm and reinforce the social cohesion of society. To this end, there was a uniform curriculum leaving little or no room for choice or differentiation. In addition, the curriculum, especially that of such disciplines as history and civics, was geared towards the ideological aims of a communist society. In most of these countries, pre-military training was part of the compulsory programme and high value was attached to the "polytechnical" element, which entailed periods of work in factories, services or on farms.

One of the striking characteristics of the basic school was the high progression rate of students through the system: grade to grade promotion was almost automatic and nearly the full age group obtained the leaving certificate of basic schooling. Pupil assessment and certification was solely the responsibility of the school.

The unity of education governing any policy implied that all levels and types of schooling were to pursue the same goals. It determined the structure of the system and entailed the monopoly of the state as founder and owner of the schools. Beyond equality of opportunity, the education system was to a large extent expected to engender equality of outcomes and, for lack of good assessment data confirming or questioning its success in this respect, a persistent myth of equal achievement of all social groups, and high attainment of the system as a whole, was created.

Besides being offered uniform methods and contents in the acquisition of cognitive knowledge, students were also moulded in the same attitudes and behaviour patterns. Education in out-of-school clubs and associations and in the family were to obey the

same principles as school education and pursue the same common goals, and there were close organisational links between these numerous providers. In short, all education, irrespective of where or by whom it was provided, was part of one single state-controlled enterprise aiming at the complete transformation of the subjects' personality. Unity of purpose led logically to uniformity of content and organisation.

At the secondary level, although separate streams for general, technical and vocational education existed, the paradigm of a one-purpose enterprise, all parts of which were organically linked, also prevailed. The primary goal of all secondary education was to form socialist citizens. "Equality", in this respect, meant equality of access to higher education (although there were in practice significant differences between the graduates of the various streams) and equality in status – or the denial of unequal status – for all streams, great care being particularly exercised to ensure official equality of status between the general and the technical-vocational streams. The legitimisation of the specialisation offered in the various VOTEC programmes was based on the explicit requirements for specialised labour, on behalf of the state as owner of the enterprises and services.

The break with this communist heritage after 1989 has been radical and the transition towards pluralism in education brutal; all the more so because in Cze[illegible]vakia, contrary to what had happened in other countries in the 1980s, there had bee[illegible] gradual loosening of the grip of the communist state and no softening of the unitary education model. In 1989, Czechoslovakia inherited, together with the former German Democratic Republic, a communist education system which was virtually intact.

The most important and consequential policy decisions which were taken in the first stage of the transition process can be listed as follows:

- Creation of the multi-year (six- or eight-year) *gymnasium*. Access to this level coincides with the completion of the first five-year cycle of basic schooling, whereas access to the traditional four-year *gymnasium* requires the completion of the full nine-year basic schooling.
- Freedom to develop private schools, given that the monopoly of the state over education was terminated.
- Addition of a ninth year to the basic school, thus bringing its duration in line with that of compulsory schooling, and a return to the original five-year and four-year division of the basic school.
- Extension of the schooling period required to obtain the *Maturita* to 13 years by maintaining a four-year programme in general and technical secondary education.

These structural changes are discussed below.

The creation of the multi-year *gymnasium*

The creation of the multi-year *gymnasium* has put an end to the monopoly of the basic school over the upper cycle of compulsory education. This is a radical development, the full consequences of which cannot yet be evaluated. It may lead to a disruption of the

entire structure of the education system, if no adequate policy measures are taken. This new structure now being implemented represents a compromise between the two dominant Western European models: the comprehensive or basic-school model, and the selective model.

The comprehensive model (one school for all until the completion, or near-completion, of compulsory schooling) has in Western Europe gradually become the dominant formula. It has two variants: the "Scandinavian" model, offering eight years of common basic school, such as exists in the Scandinavian countries and Portugal, and the "middle school", such as it exists in France, Greece, Italy, Spain and large areas of Belgium, offering a common middle school after primary education.

The selective model allocates pupils with a primary school education of varying, but usually short length, to different types of secondary schools with their own characteristics and outlets. It is usually associated with the German-speaking countries, but in a modified version it also exists in the Netherlands and in parts of Belgium. The situation in England is atypical, and offers a parallel with that in the Czech Republic: whereas the comprehensive lower secondary or middle school is by far the most common, in some areas pupils can transfer to selective grammar schools or to secondary modern schools after primary education. However, enrolment in these selective schools is barely 10 per cent of the total and is unlikely to greatly increase in the foreseeable future.

Whether early streaming makes much difference in terms of the chances of access to higher education is a matter of debate. Clearly, the comprehensive model is more equitable, as it postpones the decision to select students out of programmes leading to higher education as long as possible. On the other hand, the selective model offers numerous horizontal and vertical possibilities of transfer among the various types of schools, in an attempt to mitigate the adverse effect of early streaming on equity. Thus, in Germany, access to higher education is possible from all types of secondary education, including from the dual system. Moreover, in countries with selective secondary systems, an extensive system of pupil guidance and orientation exists, to ensure that pupil choices correspond both to their competencies and their wishes, and that transfer to other programmes is based on a well-informed decision.

The principal challenge facing Czech education policy in this context is not so much that of the early and almost definitive nature of selection for higher education, although it may legitimately be believed that selection at such an early age (11 to 13) rests on social as much as on academic criteria. One heritage from the past is near-equivalency for the graduates from all secondary education streams, in terms of the right to apply for admission to higher education. This serves partly to offset some of the adverse effects, in equity terms, of early selection in the multi-year *gymnasium*.

The main threat lies in the consequences that the new, parallel structure is likely to have for the basic school, and for the traditional *gymnasium*. In the Czech Republic, enrolment in *gymnasia* in 1995-96 represented approximately 22 per cent of all secondary-school enrolment. In the same year, some 11 per cent of the 11 to 13 year-olds were enrolled in the multi-year *gymnasium*, and the number of applicants far exceeded the number of those admitted, pointing to a large social demand for this type of education. In a context of overall decrease in the number of pupils enrolled in basic school as a

result of the demographic decline, it is almost certain that this percentage will increase rapidly in the coming years. At present, it is already much higher than the national average in large towns.

A further increase in the proportion of young people enrolled in the multi-year *gymnasium* will inevitably have three serious consequences. Firstly, the basic school will be depleted not only of the top-level, but of all "good" pupils, and thus be doomed to become the school for mediocre and low performers. Secondly, it will transform the *gymnasium* itself, at least in many cases, into a school which cannot any longer, as it pretends now, claim the pursuit of excellence as its main *raison d'être*. Thirdly, it will undermine the recruitment base for the four-year *gymnasium*.

The review team believes that the result of such developments would be to unbalance the school system as a whole; everything, therefore, should be done to prevent such an unpropitious eventuality from becoming reality. Unfortunately there is no simple and single solution on offer, and the margins for action of the Czech government are politically very limited in this matter.

One reason for this is that the legitimacy of the eight-year *gymnasium* and of its six-year variant is questioned by few, in fact only by those for whom the principle of a common school for all until completion of compulsory education is sacrosanct. It is generally considered that the freedom to re-establish the multi-year *gymnasium* is an essential element of the revival of democracy. Besides, its proponents believe that it is also an indispensable component of the effort to achieve high quality secondary education and to provide universities with the academic excellence that they need to fulfil their role in society. The review team was also informed repeatedly that in order to preserve its high quality, the *gymnasium* should enrol a maximum of 15 per cent of the appropriate age-group.

This stand calls for two comments. The first refers to the paradigm of the university as an "elite" institution, which is widely supported in the Czech Republic, as in most other CEECs. Many academics fear that the democratisation of higher education will lead to a lower quality of higher education. On the other hand, most foreign observers (*e.g.* the OECD *Review of Higher Education in the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic*) as well as many academics and political leaders believe that the days of elitist universities are past and that it is in the interest of the country to promote a vigorous growth in student numbers. Such a growth cannot come from a *gymnasium* which enrols only a small percentage of the age-group. VOTEC diploma-holders, on the other hand, cannot substitute for general secondary education graduates because the evolution of VOTEC towards an essentially higher education preparatory institution would, for the time being, be an unwelcome development. The only viable alternative, therefore, seems to be a policy of vigorous expansion of enrolment in general secondary education and the abandonment of the selection practices of the *gymnasium*.

The second comment refers to the above-mentioned enrolment target. It seems unlikely that the 15-per cent "ceiling" will be respected. It is likely that multi-year *gymnasia* will be virtually forced to give preference to growth or maintenance of pupil numbers at the expense of quality considerations. Eventually, many of them will cease to be "elite" institutions and thus lose their principal legitimisation, while the legitimacy of

the basic school will definitely have been undermined. There is also a strong chance that the choice between two types of schools for the 11 to 15 age group will increasingly depend upon social, rather than academic, criteria. Should this happen, the social cleavage that they already represent will be further reinforced.

According to some observers, this struggle of the multi-year *gymnasium* to maintain excellence – and often for sheer survival – may have a positive repercussion to the extent that it could lead to the "survival of the fittest". However, before this occurs, there will have been a great loss of energy and resources, much frustration among parents and pupils and, most serious of all, great damage done to the upper cycle of the basic school.

The decline of the four-year *gymnasium*, almost certain to result from the expansion of the multi-year variant, will, on the other hand, have negative consequences for secondary education and in particular for VOTEC. Those four-year *gymnasia* still open will attract too few good pupils to remain competitive. Moreover, many of them will become too small to offer a sufficiently large curriculum. Some proponents of the multi-year *gymnasium* feel that the four-year variant should be phased out because it will not be able to compete with the multi-year variant in terms of the quality of pupils and of outcomes. They argue that the only reason to maintain it would be to provide an access route to higher education for pupils enrolled in upper basic education, so that they do not feel excluded before they try to accede to higher education.

Technical education at the secondary level would also suffer from a dramatic loss of status if the four-year *gymnasium* was to decline or even disappear. The abiding policy in favour of equality between secondary general and technical education would suffer a strong setback. In the opinion of the review team, this would have a disastrous effect on all secondary education and it is urgent to design a viable alternative policy.

The present government is fully aware of the risks. Efforts have already been made to keep the situation under control. It has been decided to reduce the difference between the "normatives" (the amount of state subsidy per pupil paid to schools) received by the *gymnasia* and the basic schools. Furthermore, the rules governing the recognition of new schools have been tightened. But these measures can only have limited effects as, in view of the constitutional freedom of education, new establishments which respect the rules must be recognised and subsidised. The government cannot easily stop the growth in the numbers of pupils, which automatically entails more funding.

In the opinion of the review team, three policy directions merit consideration in response to this structural problem.

- The first concerns the internal organisation, the quality of the service offered and the public image of the basic school – particularly of its upper cycle. The key element should be a well-structured curriculum offering purposeful differentiation, in order to accommodate students with different abilities and interests.
- The second concerns the speedy implementation of the standards which the relevant political and educational bodies have now defined and advocate for all compulsory education. In this context, their mandatory nature for the multi-year *gymnasium* is an indispensable part of the relevant policy. The development of adequate instruments for quality control focusing on attainments or outcomes is another indispensable element.

– The third policy direction concerns the introduction of "multi-profile" schools, where the lower cycle of multi-year *gymnasia* and the upper cycle of basic schools would coexist, sharing facilities and teaching resources (including teachers, *e.g.* for second and third foreign languages) and offering transfer facilities between the two types of school. A strong argument in favour of the "multi-profile" option is provided by the decline in pupil numbers at this level, which has already led to a strong decrease in enrolment and numbers of pupils per school. This policy course would take the Czech education system some way towards the "intermediate" model described earlier in this report, with a comprehensive "middle school" distinct from primary and secondary education, as it exists in various European countries (parts of Belgium, France, Italy and Greece). It would help to counter the negative implications of the development of the multi-year *gymnasium* for equality of educational opportunity.

Private education

The development of private education is the second major structural change which has occurred in the Czech Republic since 1989 and there is probably nobody in the country who would want to rescind a decision which put an end to the monopoly of the state in education. To date, the modest expansion of private schools at the basic and secondary general levels and the fact that a rapid further growth seems very unlikely, attenuate the apprehension that, as a result of massive enrolment in private schools, another social cleavage might appear in Czech education – a cleavage which also could undermine the quality and efficiency of the public education service.

Many private schools have good reputations due to their innovative approach, to small numbers of pupils per class and to the quality and the strong commitment of their teachers. However, some private establishments seem to have squandered much of their good repute by lowering their admission standards in order to maintain or to increase pupil numbers. The future of private schools depends on their ability to continue to offer a better and more diversified curriculum than public education and to keep pupil numbers per class low.

The financing of private schools is controversial, as it has been argued that these schools compete with their public counterparts on unequal terms since, in addition to the almost full public subsidy they receive to cover their running costs, they charge tuition fees. Obviously, this has a direct effect on their recruitment base: high fees mean that only affluent parents can afford to send their children to private schools, although some recruitment may also respond to parents' demand for better and more innovative education. Nevertheless, there is a real risk of private education becoming an elitist and socially exclusive part of Czech education, finding its legitimisation more in the need for students to distinguish themselves socially from the mass public sector than in the demand for genuine educational difference. On the other hand, high fees effectively slow down expansion and reduce the risk of inefficient competition for pupils in a context of declining pupil numbers.

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In the opinion of the review team, government policy towards the private education sector should be guided by the two following principles. The first concerns equity. In the present stage of the Czech transition process, it might be difficult to reach total financial equality between public and private schools, for example, by setting a ceiling to the extra resources which private schools are allowed to mobilise. However, private schools should be subjected to the same rules as the public sector in terms of curricula, teacher quality and working conditions, pupil assessment and quality control. Thus, for example, the curriculum standards currently being developed should fully apply to private schools. Regular monitoring of quality in private education should be carried out, with attention given to admission criteria, the conformity of curricula with national standards, procedures for measurement of student achievement and financing. This task should be entrusted to the Inspectorate (Chapter 6).

The second principle rests on the complementarity between public and private education. It must be positively noted that the legitimacy of private education in the Czech Republic rests, partly at least, on its innovativeness. These innovative efforts should be encouraged and recognised and, where and when appropriate, be promoted by means of special funding from public money. However, measures should be taken so that they benefit the entire education sector. Two strategies should be adopted to this end:

- A vigorous policy of educational research, innovation and dissemination, transcending the division between public and private education and aiming in particular at the dissemination of the innovative efforts in private education to the public sector. Joint innovation projects including public and private partners should be promoted in this context.
- Initiatives which encourage and facilitate co-operation between private and public schools on a local and regional basis. The pooling of "human resources" should be the key element in this respect.

Czech policy in the area of private education is bound to evolve in the coming years, as more experience is acquired and as is felt the full effect of such factors as the decline of pupil numbers, widened access to higher education, the demand for more curriculum differentiation and for the individualisation of learning, and closer co-operation between schools and local communities. Czech policy might profit from the relevant experience of other OECD countries, in such matters as legislation, financing, curriculum and assessment, human (teacher) resources and innovation.

Extending the basic school to nine years

The decision of Czech authorities to add a ninth year to the basic school provides a unique opportunity to review in their totality the functions and the curricula of the basic school. New curricula have been prepared. The new function of guidance and preparation for the various secondary programmes should in one way or another be given shape in the curriculum of the upper stage of the basic school. Obviously, the contribution of the ninth year to the equity of educational provision depends on its intake in social terms as well as in ability. The range of pupil ability in the new ninth year will be much larger than in the

"old" ninth form, which had become a form of schooling for those pupils who did not get access to secondary education. However, it should be reiterated that a wide scale "skimming off" of pupils in favour of the multi-year *gymnasium* would again saddle the upper cycle of the basic school with the impossible task of providing relevant and high-quality instruction to a school population feeling excluded beforehand from the "mainstream" of the multi-year *gymnasium*.

In the coming years, an evaluation of the effects of the introduction of the ninth year should be carried out, focusing on the way in which the entire upper cycle of basic schooling is reorganised and on its impact on the preparation of pupils for secondary education. It may well be that the outcome of such an evaluation leads to the conclusion that an overall reform of the curriculum of the basic school is needed and that the relationship between the multi-year *gymnasium* and the basic school should be reconsidered.

It is customary for Czech children to enter basic school via the kindergarten, although provision in large cities is insufficient to meet the demand for places. To some extent, pre-school provision, if systematic, can be considered as another extension of the basic school. This trend can be reinforced by the possibility – if not the likelihood – of a "drift" of the kindergarten programme towards academic development (e.g. the teaching of foreign languages and other special programmes), as opposed to the fostering of the social and personal development of all young children. In that case, non-attendance may in the future affect children's ability to successfully integrate the basic school. Thus, the further development of kindergarten – both in terms of provision and programmes – needs to be given close attention.

The government strategy relating to the kindergarten programme appears unclear. Parents' strong interest in their children's educational career, combined with their greater say in school matters, may create pressures to stress cognitive learning in kindergarten to the detriment of social and personal development functions. On the one hand, the "cohabitation" of kindergarten and basic schools, especially in those cases where the latter comprehends only the first five-year cycle, is recommended to facilitate the transition from kindergarten to basic school and to improve the existing flexibility in terms of age of access to basic schooling. Such a "cohabitation" can also help to better use scarce resources. On the other hand, however, the combined provision of pre-school and basic education may encourage the risk of a "drift" of kindergarten education towards "preparatory years" for the basic school.

Strengthening the four-year secondary programmes

Extending the basic school to nine years while maintaining a four-year programme in the *gymnasium* and in technical secondary schools leads to a system where 13 years of schooling are required to obtain the *Maturita*. This is not uncommon in Europe: in Italy, Germany for the *Abitur*, and the United Kingdom where schooling starts at 5, it takes 13 years to reach the secondary school-leaving examination.

In the Czech context, the survival of the four-year *gymnasium* and the maintenance of a high quality teaching in this school type would appear to best be served by bringing the entire secondary sector under one roof, first of all by sharing facilities on a single "campus". Thus a first step would be made towards the necessary reconsideration of the three-tier structure of secondary education, a need that is also recognised in the Ministry's policy statement on *Quality and Accountability*. Incentives should be provided for the establishment of "multi-profile" secondary schools, groups which would include VOTEC and general secondary education.

Beyond this grouping, which will probably be unavoidable if the further decline in pupil numbers is not to affect the range of curriculum choice in all three types of secondary education, a major effort should be undertaken to remodel secondary curricula. The tendency to sharpen the demarcation between the general and the technical and vocational programmes which has marked the first period after 1989 has already opened the way for change, first of all by enhancing the share of general education in the curriculum of technical schools. In this respect, the intention formulated in the Ministry's policy statement on *Quality and Accountability* to vigorously pursue the promotion of general education in the VOTEC curricula should be supported.

A beneficial outcome of such an approach would be increased possibilities for young people to transfer between the various types of secondary education. Indirectly, this development would also help to correct current inadequate selection procedures for *gymnasium* and secondary education. Furthermore, it would lead to a much better preparation for higher education of pupils enrolled in the technical and vocational branches.

The latter is crucial, as the growth of student numbers in higher education recommended by OECD examiners in their 1992 review will have to come from the secondary VOTEC programmes. An increased rate of transfer from VOTEC to higher education has two other potential beneficial effects. Firstly, it will contribute to the democratisation of higher education and thus enhance equity. Secondly, VOTEC students will bring other expectations and competencies into higher education than those of *gymnasium* graduates and will thus constitute a vector of qualitative change in higher education if these new demands are given a positive response. Furthermore, that response will centre mostly on non-university programmes and institutions. This provides another strong argument in favour of the revision of VOTEC curricula and of a reformed structure for all secondary education.

Chapter 3

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IN GENERAL EDUCATION

The present situation

The ailments of the Czech school curriculum – encyclopaedism, overload, an excessively discipline-based approach – are common to a number of other OECD countries as well as to most education systems in central and eastern Europe. Their persistence has much to do with past heritage. Indeed, centralised and prescriptive curricula, and even single and mandatory manuals, have had much appeal. In the Czech context, as elsewhere in central and eastern Europe, they provided the homogeneity and comparability not assured by standardised or even simply comparable inter-school achievement measurement. They also protected teachers from the risks inherent in making choices and expressing views and preferences.

The political decisions taken since 1989 have ended the former central, unique and mandatory curricula and textbooks and given schools more freedom in curriculum matters than is usual in many OECD countries. It is beyond the scope of this review to assess the extent to which curricular autonomy at the school level has actually influenced the quality of teaching and learning in Czech schools. It seems, however, that the innovative potential that could be activated by school autonomy is lower than what many reformers had expected. According to some estimates, no more than 10 per cent of all schools were able to produce significant curricular innovations. It would appear that in a majority of schools, the essence of teaching has not changed, perhaps for lack of time, external resources and outside guidance. Much of the teaching has remained "frontal" and bookish, pupils are assigned an exclusively passive role and learning outcomes are expected to faithfully correspond to what has been taught. As one observer said, "the school curricula may have changed, but the basic philosophy has remained the same".

Schools are criticised, among other things, for treating children as "objects", for not giving them an active role to play in the educational process. If schools have not changed as much as had been expected in 1989, in the eyes of many teachers this is also due to parents. Most parents expect the school to concentrate on its cognitive tasks and have little understanding for teachers who opt for a broader approach, aiming at the full personality development of children. There is thus a sort of silent conspiracy between large groups of parents and the more conservative fraction of the teaching force.

At the same time, however, it is acknowledged that many schools – and many teachers – have been innovative. The negative image described above, it is sometimes argued, may correspond more to what happened in the first years after 1989, but would no longer be representative of the Czech school of today.

Still, changed practices and innovative approaches alone are not enough to profoundly transform Czech education. New value systems must be developed, which embody the principles of the new society in the making. Schools still have a long way to go before reaching these goals. Values are absent from their programmes and there is no place for them in the philosophy of most teachers. On the contrary, in the wake of the rejection of communism, there is a widespread reluctance to engage in a fundamental overhaul of ideas and principles. Mistrust of the past undoubtedly plays a role in this rejection of anything resembling indoctrination, but perhaps the absence of values in schools is also due to the lack of a "society project" commanding consensus.

The lesson which can be drawn from these considerations is that schools cannot be seen as the unique and most important engine of curricular innovation. In the Czech Republic, as in most other central and eastern European countries, the demise of educational centralism has created a void in terms of consistency and comparability which, for the time being, has not been filled. There has been inadequate central guidance and direction. No fundamentally new curriculum paradigms have been proposed, and no clear indication given as to the final societal goal which education should strive to help attain.

This gap leaves in many people's minds, especially parents and teachers, uncertainty about the way forward. The guiding ideas of the transition process, *i.e.* democratisation and the market economy, have not been sufficiently elaborated, and, over the past few years, the original consensus has been seriously eroded.

Institutional arrangements

It is now generally acknowledged that the government should play a leading role in curricular innovation. The work done on educational standards, and the clear stand as to the role and duties of the state set out in the Ministry's document *Quality and Accountability*, indicate that views have developed towards a more active central government policy, including a fair amount of central steering of the content of education.

However, a task of this size cannot be carried out by the Ministry alone. "Horizontal" democratic management requires the establishment of a wider political platform involving all "partners" within and outside the educational system: teachers and pupils themselves in the first place, possibly through their active participation in School Councils, parents and the social partners, representatives of universities and other curriculum experts. The mission of such a platform which might be called National Curriculum Council, would be to accredit new or updated curricula after thorough discussions among all interested parties.

The work of this Council should be carefully prepared by a competent research body. The Educational Research Institute, which has so far played a key role in curriculum development, could be an appropriate choice. It has, among others, departments for

social sciences and languages, for science and mathematics and for extra-curricular education. Its staff has been severely reduced, but it can call on outside expertise from other research institutes, subject matter associations and faculties of education if necessary. It is currently in charge of developing the curriculum standards for the basic school and for secondary education.

Whatever educational material the Institute prepares, apart from the mandatory standards, would only be proposed to schools once it has been accredited by the National Curriculum Council. Schools would be free to use it or employ other material. The policy of "free" curriculum development, with the state proposing one model programme, obviously makes sense only if there is a choice of programmes and material and if schools have real access to other resources.

There is, however, a major weakness in this approach, due to the lack of a regional echelon in education administration capable of bridging the gap between the Ministry and individual schools. This is true of secondary schools and of basic schools as well, as the role of the district School Offices is limited to administrative matters. This is unfortunate, because differentiation in curriculum makes more sense when it is tackled at the regional, rather than at the school level. Furthermore, the active participation of a regional echelon in curriculum development would alleviate the task of central bodies. On the question of regional administration, see Chapter 6.

Fortunately, however, there are other non-ministerial resources. A great number of professional associations and voluntary groups of teachers have been created (and in some cases been re-established) which are very active on the educational scene. Many curriculum initiatives have been taken by such groups and associations. Often these initiatives combat the above-mentioned weaknesses of the Czech curriculum (by, for example, focusing on interdisciplinary projects in new fields such as health and environment education). Besides, some of the large municipalities dispose of their own professional staff and play an active role in curriculum development. Finally, as already mentioned in Chapter 2, many interesting curriculum development projects have been undertaken by private schools.

Another role for the central level, and especially for the Ministry, is to create the conditions for the many spontaneous and voluntary initiatives to spread beyond the schools where they have been created, so that they affect the bulk of Czech schools. The EXTRA programme and the Development Programme for Basic and Secondary Schools are devoting considerable funds to innovative schools and programmes, but there seems to be little steering of the process. Furthermore, there is no adequate networking system which would allow for horizontal dissemination of the results of innovation projects.

Clarity must be achieved as to the legitimisation and eventual organisation of curriculum differentiation. If one of its main objectives is to enlarge individual choice, within-school differentiation will need to be given more importance than it is given at present. As already indicated, within-school differentiation is difficult to achieve in smaller schools. The dilemma arising in this respect is whether to create larger schools through massive school mergers for the sake of more curriculum choice, or to maintain

the smaller schools, and sacrifice the within-school curriculum diversity. It may be that clustering or networking between schools within restricted geographical areas can partly solve this problem.

Curriculum standards and programmes

The responsibility for setting national standards and approving educational programmes lies with the Ministry of Education, but Czech schools have acquired considerable autonomy in this area since 1989. According to the present sharing of responsibilities, the Ministry decides on 90 per cent of school subjects and the schools on 10 per cent; within subjects, the sharing is 70 per cent for the former and 30 per cent for the latter. Thus, schools have the right to adapt the nationally-approved syllabi to local needs, with the result that nearly one-third of the prescribed contents can be altered. In many subjects, the school may divide the classes so that pupils with different interests and capabilities may follow different courses. Exceptionally, schools can conduct pedagogical experiments and can develop entirely new programmes, subject to Ministry approval.

Standards for basic education have been developed since 1993, but it is too early to assess their effectiveness. Preliminary reactions show that the initiative of the Ministry to use curriculum standards as a regulating means to guarantee the quality of the educational service has been on the whole rather successful. However, fear is also expressed here and there, and particularly in the private school sector and in the innovative schools, that the standards might stifle creativity and that they could erode the schools' newly acquired autonomy.

This is a well-known dilemma. Either standards set very global indications as to goals to be pursued and results to be attained for the programme as a whole and thus risk to be of little use to school directors and teachers, or they set detailed objectives for every grade and for every discipline and thus pose too great a restriction on the freedom of the school and teachers. The system adopted in the Czech Republic seems to eschew both extremes: it sets goals and attainment targets per grade and discipline, besides defining the global goals and attainments, but it does not go into much detail as regards either content or didactics. The latter tasks are left to programmes elaborated at the school level.

It is difficult at this stage to determine whether the right balance has been attained. In view of the sensitivities to central guidelines for educational content, the distinction between mandatory general standards and voluntary detailed programmes is undoubtedly a judicious one. If there is one criticism to be made, it is that the consultation base has been too narrow in the preparatory stage, as a result of which some partners in the educational world feel that they have been excluded. It may be wise, therefore, to envisage a short period of broad consultation before the standards are definitely adopted. Understandably, whereas the government would like to proceed quickly, this would further delay their definitive introduction. The matter is, however, too important to risk opposition on the part of large groups of committed teachers and other partners, or even their alienation.

Documentation and guidance

The state and the quality of educational documentation and guidance need to be scrutinised in view of the new needs which arise from school autonomy and from choice of curriculum. The immediate users of documentation and guidance should be the students and the teachers themselves, as they are the ones who either have to make the relevant curriculum choices, or advise on those choices. They must have access to the proper documentation and to guidance, in their own school or in the immediate neighbourhood. The tasks of the guidance centres will need to be accordingly redefined. They should deal not only with problems relating to pupils' learning and behaviour but, also with the development of school experiences and innovations in teaching, and should be provided with adequate resources in terms of material and staff competence. The present number of guidance centres, however, may be too high to allow adequate resources in terms of material equipment and professional staffing. A viable solution may be to develop the professional capacity in a small number of regional centres, and to assign to other, smaller ones, the tasks of dissemination and direct accessibility to schools and students.

Textbooks

Over the past few years new textbooks have been written and printed in great numbers by private publishing houses. Often they were reworked versions of old manuals, but gradually, authentically new material has also been produced. The Educational Research Institute is actively involved in this task and it co-operates closely with groups of teachers. Regular consultation and co-operation between the central administration and its Educational Research Institute on the one hand, and the private publishing houses on the other, are necessary for the present free-market textbook policy to function satisfactorily. The task of providing schools with new textbooks is far from being complete and it is, moreover, likely that some of the material produced in the past few years is not up to standard. The monitoring of textbook production and dissemination, even when as liberal as possible, requires good professional judgement and high political sensitivity. It also must be carried out within the limits of a clear mandate and of a clear distribution of responsibilities.

It may be advisable to set up a special working party to examine the issues at stake and formulate relevant policy recommendations. Private publishers, as well as representatives of schools, of teachers' professional associations active in the relevant disciplines and of interested parties outside the school (essentially the social partners, but also representatives of political life and of "civil society", *i.e.* human rights and environment associations, the health sector, and consumer organisations) should be represented on such a working party. It could at first be given an *ad hoc* status, but a permanent status should not be excluded beforehand.

Chapter 4

STUDENT PROGRESSION AND ASSESSMENT

Progression through basic and secondary education

Under the communist regime, student progression through the school system was traditionally a smooth process in the Czech Republic. Successful completion rates were high, drop-outs were few and repeater rates low compared to those in many OECD countries. In education, as elsewhere in society, success was a (political) duty and failure not admissible.

Much of this perception has survived. The entire age-cohort reaches the last grade of compulsory education in the required time and the transition rate to secondary education is also apparently close to 100 per cent. Over 95 per cent of the candidates pass the secondary school final examination (*Maturita*) at a first sitting and another 3 to 4 per cent at the second. Population groups known in other OECD countries under various names – low-achievers, school failures or drop-outs – are unknown in the Czech Republic or are at least not reflected in progression statistics.

Two factors can be advanced to explain these high success rates in secondary education. The first is the severe entrance examination for the *gymnasium* (in some *gymnasia*, no more than one out of three or four applicants are admitted), and to a lesser extent, for the technical school.

A second factor is the high commitment of most teachers, which has tended to increase since the political changes in 1989. The review team was often told that Czech schools, and in particular secondary schools, are very good indeed and that Czech students do well in foreign universities. However, the latter point overlooks the fact that entrance in Czech universities is extremely selective, as not more that one *Maturita* graduate out of two succeeds in gaining admission. This may be in part because not all *Maturita* holders are equally well prepared for university entrance examinations, even if in theory all are entitled to try for them. The shortage of university places is another cause. Thus, at present, there is a very sharp contrast between low selectivity in granting basic and secondary education diplomas and high selectivity at university entrance. It is possible that the latter is necessary to offset the absence of selectivity earlier in the system.

Given the above, and despite the general perception that the quality of education in Czech schools is good, there is a growing interest in quality assessment in basic and

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secondary education, and more specifically about assessment of learning achievements of pupils. Various documents, including the statement of the Ministry of Education on *Quality and Accountability*, put special emphasis on quality assurance as an important policy goal. It has become a highly debated issue. In the absence of solid and comparable attainment data, statements about the good performance of the system cannot be validated. Furthermore, the demand for transparency and comparability of achievements is growing not only because of the need for international comparisons and because of the explosion of international exchange and co-operation, but also for internal reasons. Widened access to higher education, the emergence of a private school sector, decline of enrolment in vocational education, and other such developments, have led to questions as to their possible impact upon quality. The coexistence of two competing school types at the upper primary-lower secondary schooling has further added to the concern for quality.

Admission examinations

At present, the admission examinations to the multi-year *gymnasium*, after grade 5 or 7, represent the first extra-school selection process in a pupil's educational career. Selection is especially severe in larger towns, where demand exceeds the availability of places. In view of the growing importance that this early selection plays in Czech basic education, the authorities would be well advised to attempt to obtain clarity as to its criteria and its effects. As the admissions conditions are set by individual *gymnasia* and as the directors have full authority over admission, comparable data is not available.

A similar situation prevails at the second major selection step, *i.e.* admission to secondary schools after the completion of the full basic school. In view of the poor facilities for transfer between secondary programmes, this selection process is vitally important for a pupil's further educational career. As in other OECD countries, there is a hierarchy between programmes (here, *gymnasium*, technical, vocational), the best students being admitted to the academic or general programme (*gymnasium*), and the least performing to vocational education. Many countries have attempted to alleviate the effects of the difference in status between general and technical-vocational education by, for example, granting VOTEC graduates admission to higher education, and by increasing the share of general education in VOTEC curricula. The first step – admission to higher education – in the Czech case had already been taken prior to 1989. The present government also actively promotes more general education in the curricula of technical schools. However, poor transferability between programmes deprives these measures of much of their efficiency, and gives excessive importance to admission examinations.

Admission to secondary schools also provides education authorities with a chance to influence the allocation of pupils among the three streams of secondary education. As noted in Chapter 2, by international standards, enrolment in *gymnasium* education is too low compared to that in technical and vocational schools. This situation neither reflects the new course of the Czech economy since 1989, nor proves satisfactory in terms of equity. Overly selective *gymnasia* run counter to the idea of "free choice" in education

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which is a central principle in Czech education policy. There is little chance of correcting this imbalance as long as *gymnasia* are free to set their own admission standards.

A characteristic common to these examinations is that they attempt to measure student abilities on entry into a *gymnasium* or technical school. Quality assessment aimed at measuring abilities at the end of basic school, whether after five or nine years of schooling, does not exist. Another feature is the extreme institutional fragmentation of the assessment process, which is under the sole responsibility of the individual secondary schools, and the resulting lack of comparability among schools. Prospective students apply to various schools in order to increase their chances of admission, and they have to sit for a different examination for each of them. This is a very burdensome system for pupils, not to mention the waste of time and energy for school directors and teachers in organising these examinations.

In short, the present examination system suffers from three major shortcomings. Firstly, it is exclusively school-based and therefore does not yield comparable results. Secondly, it relies on entrance exams rather than on past achievements. Thirdly, it puts an undue burden on pupils and leads to a waste of time, energy and resources. As a result, the examination system does not lead to systematic measures of quality, nor can it be used to steer the system in one direction or another. The government is convinced that quality assessment should be given a more useful and strategic role in Czech education and that a new approach to student assessment should be one of the relevant policy measures. However, practical applications of this policy orientation ("what", "when" and "how") are still in a preliminary state of discussion and concrete proposals have not yet been advanced.

Pupil assessment throughout the school system

The shortcomings of the present examination system call for the introduction of more elaborate procedures of pupil assessment, such as nationally comparable achievement standards and tests to complement the curriculum standards described in the previous chapter. From the perspective of the systemic management of Czech education, nationwide achievement testing at key stages would be extremely useful, because it would provide the Ministry of Education and the education community as a whole with a means to appraise quality. School directors, teachers, parents and pupils would benefit from regular assessment of results on comparable terms.

The reviewers believe that the situation would greatly improve if pupil assessment were to be organised throughout basic school, with a mandatory final examination at the end of basic school. Appropriate standardised measurement instruments should be designed for this purpose. As to the final examination, it should include external, as well as school-based, attainment measurements to ensure comparability among schools. The results should be taken into consideration in the selection process for admission to secondary schools. They should also be used by district School Offices, the Ministry and the educational community to establish "quality maps" of basic schools, thus providing a basis for measures aimed at fostering quality in schools with relatively poor results.

It should be noted that this is a politically sensitive issue which may encounter opposition, as it might be considered as a return to central quality control by "the state". A possible alternative would be to develop good-quality testing instruments without imposing them on schools. Even if it is left to schools to adopt these achievement tests, it is likely that, provided they are of good quality, they will represent an element of social pressure leading gradually to their adoption and use. Their development might be entrusted to the Educational Research Institute. In developing the tests, excessive stress on "factual" knowledge should be avoided, even if there is much pressure to give priority to cognitive achievements.

A satisfactory solution to the quality assessment issue is the touchstone upon which the successful transformation of the Czech education system may be judged. Quality assessment is the necessary complement to the reforms which have been carried out very successfully until now. It will not only provide the central administration with the necessary information to carry out its quality assurance role, but it will also provide the indispensable feedback needed by partners at all levels, from the ministry to the classroom, to the parents and students, to judge the quality of the work. The ultimate objective should be to make available to teachers, parents and pupils and other partners the criteria for admission, for grade-to-grade promotion and for transfer between programmes throughout the school system, so that educational choices and decisions can be made on the basis of adequate information.

Reforming the *Maturita*

The *Maturita* examination at the end of secondary education could be another means to measure pupil achievement, but because on average only 1 per cent of candidates fail the *Maturita* examination (a very low failure rate, when compared to other OECD countries where school-leaving examinations are used), the results cannot be used as a yardstick to assess academic quality. Furthermore, since each school organises its own *Maturita* examination, there is no comparability of results among schools or pupils. The unavoidable consequence is that Czech universities and faculties make little use of *Maturita* results, which are considered at best as one – and not the most important – criterion for student admission. Lacking confidence in the levels of achievement implied by the *Maturita*, they organise their own selection examinations, and, as for the secondary level, students sit for as many entrance exams as possible in order to increase their chance of admission, entailing another waste of time and resources.

At present, the *Maturita* is the exclusive responsibility of the schools and does not allow comparisons between schools and pupils. Gradually, the view is gaining ground in the central administration and in universities, that something must be done. Proposals for a new organisation of the examination differ very widely. A national examination of whatever kind would probably be unacceptable in the present political context, in part because of the general mistrust of interference from central authorities in the educational process. There is also fear from the educational community that a centrally-set examination would negatively affect teachers' motivation to be innovative and that it would lead to "teaching to the test".

The universities seem to be in favour of the replacement of the *Maturita* by a comparable and relatively standardised examination. Should there be such an examination permitting comparisons of results between schools, universities and faculties might consider abandoning their own entrance examinations. However, this would not mean acceptance of the (new) *Maturita* as giving automatic right of access to higher education. The final decision would remain with the universities.

It must be acknowledged that the *Maturita* issue is sensitive and that its reorganisation must be carried out with caution and tact. The fact that the Ministry of Education has taken the initiative to establish a committee to prepare proposals for a new *Maturita* is to be seen as a positive development. The solution lies undoubtedly in a combination between achievement testing established at the school and an externally-set examination. The nature and balance of the combination must be negotiated between the various interested parties.

The *Maturita* has to satisfy various needs, those of higher education and those of the labour market. Both purposes must be given a place in the new model. In the opinion of the review team, only a *Maturita* comprising several variants, each with a different mix of disciplines, some more academically-oriented, some more focused on labour-market competencies, can meet these different requirements. Obviously, the variant chosen by the student will have to depend on the specific curriculum followed. Differentiating the *Maturita* according to courses taken during secondary education would be just as important as progress towards comparability among schools.

A further question to be addressed is whether the external examination which would be part of the new *Maturita* should be imposed on the schools. There appears to be no stringent need to take this route. The aim being pursued can just as well be attained by developing examination instruments which would be proposed to schools and which they would be free to use. If the proposed tests are of good quality, they will probably rapidly be used by most institutions. However, the elaboration of the instruments must be done in close consultation with the schools and with the universities, as well as with input from partners in the labour market. An examination board on which these various parties are represented would have to be established; the professional part of the task could be entrusted to the Educational Research Institute.

Chapter 5

REINFORCING QUALITY IN THE TEACHING FORCE

In the Czech Republic, a prominent feature in the development of education and training is the central role of teachers. In addressing the difficulties encountered in reforming education and training to meet the needs of a society and economy in transition, all those involved in the development or implementation of school policy – from school directors, School Office directors, and ministry officials to researchers, inspectorate staff and faculties of education – drew the attention of the team of examiners to the vital importance of teachers, their preparation and conditions of work.

The broad nature of the problems and issues raised in the Czech Republic would be recognised in other OECD countries. Common to all countries, there are both quantitative and qualitative dimensions to teacher-quality issues. The quantitative factors concern how to manage the size of the teaching force in response to the evolution of student numbers, to that of student choices among the upper secondary streams, and to the ageing of the teaching staff. The qualitative dimension concerns the expertise, motivation and effectiveness of teachers.

Concerning the latter, the main issue appears to be "fitness for purpose". Teachers in the Czech Republic generally appear to have substantial preparation in subject matter. In the few schools visited by the research team, the teachers conveyed an impressive commitment to, and reflection upon, teaching. However, these high-quality teachers are not necessarily well-prepared for the new challenges faced by schools in the democratic, pluralistic, advanced market-economy country emerging in the wake of the political changes of 1989. These challenges include responding to diverse student needs and interests, as well as to new societal expectations towards schools: continuously and flexibly adapting curricula, contexts, contents and methods of teaching in the transition period; and implementing the greater autonomy given to schools and teachers. What is required above all is for teachers to have the capacity and motivation to become more pro-active, to become more engaged in teaching and in communication with their peers, parents and the community at large, to exercise greater initiative and to acquire and apply new techniques in teaching. These capacities and dispositions, combined with already high levels of subject knowledge and commitment, provide the necessary basis for improved teaching, learning and responsiveness to change.

This perspective gives weight to a larger professional role for teachers. The development of such a conception of the teacher role and its related responsibilities will require an appropriate pre-service teacher education and a range of in-service and professional development opportunities, linked to a set of differentiated career profiles in teaching and to an adequate, rewarding salary. However, while improvements in these areas are necessary, they are not sufficient in themselves. It is the involvement of teachers and their expectations that their work will be respected, recognised and taken into account which are key. A separation of teachers from such processes does more to undermine the development of a larger professional role than low pay, a lack of equivalency in qualifications or a lack of access to programmes which provide upgrading and professional development. A former United States Commissioner of Education expressed it this way (H. Howe III, 1995):

> "I am quite sure that the respect offered to true professionals comes about because they are genuinely trusted by the people they serve. The way teachers gain that respect is by taking responsibility for what happens in their classrooms and by initiating changes to promote improved learning. The motivation to take on this difficult challenge depends in turn on their being trusted in the realm in which they work."

This chapter highlights three areas where the Czech authorities, as well as the authors of the *Background Report*, have directed attention: firstly, the context, particularly demographic developments and their implications for the quantitative requirements of the teaching force; secondly, teachers' salary, conditions of work and teaching effort and effectiveness; and finally, teacher quality, particularly the preparation and continuous development of teachers' attitudes, skills and capacities. These three areas are linked. The linkages point to the principal recommendation of the review team concerning teacher policies: what is needed is a comprehensive set of integrated and co-ordinated policies for teachers – a policy framework relating teacher pay, career paths, preparation, recruitment, evaluation, mobility and in-service education and training. In this respect, the policy framework set out in the recent report of the ministry's consultative group on *The Teacher* is welcome. Its main points represent promising avenues for development; the conclusions of the review team build on them.

Managing the composition and size of the teaching force

OECD countries differ considerably with regard to the size of their teaching force. In 1992, primary and secondary school teachers as a percentage of the labour force represented 3.8 per cent in Belgium, 3.0 per cent in Austria, 2.7 per cent in Denmark, 2.3 per cent in Australia, 2.1 per cent in the United States, 1.7 per cent in Japan and 1.6 per cent in the western *Länder* of Germany (OECD, 1995*a*). The percentage in the Czech Republic was 2.4 per cent, the same as the mean for the 16 OECD countries for which comparable data were available.

Another indicator of the overall dimensions of the teaching force is the ratio of students to teaching staff. In 1992, the ratio in *primary* education was 13.7 in Belgium,

12.2 in Austria, 10.9 in Denmark, 18.0 in Australia, 19.8 in Japan and 19.6 in the western *Länder* of Germany (OECD, 1995*a*). The ratio for the Czech Republic was 22.9, a figure higher than the mean of 18.5 for the 15 OECD countries with comparable data. At the *lower secondary* level, the ratio was 7.7 in Austria, 9.1 in Denmark, 16.8 in the United States, 16.8 in Japan, and 14.6 in the western *Länder* of Germany. The ratio for the Czech Republic was 17.0, or approximately the same as the mean of 16.6 for ten OECD countries with comparable data. At the *upper secondary* level, the ratio of students to teaching staff was 7.8 in Belgium, 11.6 in Austria, 10.4 in Denmark, 15.0 in the United States, 16.6 in Japan and 16.2 in the western *Länder* of Germany. The ratio for the Czech Republic was 10.5, which is below the mean of 14.1 for the ten OECD countries with comparable data. It is to be noted that the Czech figures include foremen teaching in vocational schools, and so overstate the number of "regular" teachers. At the level of higher education, the ratio of students to teaching staff is well below the mean in OECD countries.

Such country differences arise for reasons relating to traditions, educational structures and policy choices. In the judgement of the review team, the education system in the Czech Republic looks somewhat "over-staffed" at the upper secondary and higher education level and "understaffed" in primary education. Declining enrolment at that level in recent years may have begun to offset this difference.

However, two concerns can be expressed relative to the situation in the Czech Republic. Firstly, the trend over the past few years has been for an increase in the teaching force, at a time when overall school enrolment is decreasing. The increases reflect the effects of a range of policies. Post-1989 legislation has permitted the possibility for founders to establish new schools (private as well as state), which in the five-year period to 1994 resulted in an 8 per cent increase in the number of basic schools, a 65 per cent increase in the number of *gymnasia*, a 158 per cent increase in the number of secondary technical schools and a 9 per cent increase in the number of secondary vocational schools. As each school requires minimum staffing, the total number of teachers could be expected to increase. The problems posed by small schools are discussed in Chapters 1 and 6. Another initiative, to be implemented in 1996, is to increase the length of basic (compulsory) schooling from eight to nine years. Despite the decline in student enrolment, this change is expected to require a 10 to 12 per cent increase in the number of teachers at this level. A third initiative is the limit placed on class sizes in *gymnasia*.

Secondly, and more specifically, the teaching force at the secondary level – already high relative to enrolment – is set to become too large over the next five years and appears to be poorly dimensioned to accommodate the changing preferences of students among the streams. Since 1992, for example, the ratio of students to teaching staff has declined from 17.0 to 13.3 in the second stage of basic education (lower secondary); from 16.0 to 13.6 in *gymnasia*; and from 13.2 to 11.9 in secondary technical schools. These declines are a matter of concern, given the decreases in the size of the relevant age cohorts experienced since 1989 and anticipated over the next five years. As the statistics provided in the *Background Report* graphically make clear, from the mid-1990s until the year 2000, compulsory school-aged cohorts will decrease in size by approximately 6 to

7 per cent and upper secondary, post-compulsory school-aged cohorts will decrease by some 17 per cent.

In the face of the declines, the challenge confronting the government is how to manage the overall size and composition of the teaching force. Are redundancies needed or desirable? How can overall recruitment and employment policies be crafted which permit continued recruitment of newly-qualified teachers, while ensuring needed stability for teachers and the schools in which they work? What steps can be taken to provide for a relatively smooth age distribution of the teaching force?

Overall, a reduction in the size of the teaching force in line with the decline in student numbers could be accommodated through retirements and voluntary separations. Approximately 6 per cent of teachers are presently at least 60 years old. Their likely retirement over the next five years, combined to resignations on the part of younger staff who leave teaching for a variety of reasons would lead, with no new policy intervention, to a natural reduction by the year 2000 of perhaps 8 to 10 per cent in the numbers of teachers now in post. However, there are reasons why such "natural" adjustments to the decline in overall numbers will be insufficient and pose problems of coverage and quality.

Firstly, as just noted, the distribution and evolution of student enrolment and teachers vary by level, segment, field of specialisation and geographic region. In this regard, it is to be noted that enrolment has evolved differently over the six years since 1989: declining by 18 per cent in basic education, increasing by 27 per cent in *gymnasia* and by 52 per cent in secondary technical schools and decreasing by 15 per cent in secondary vocational schools. Under current conditions and with the addition of a ninth year of compulsory, basic education, the likelihood is that enrolment will evolve differently by level and segment in both the short and long term. Any set of policy actions would need to enable responses to these differences.

A second, related consideration, is the rate of recruitment of newly-qualified (mostly young) teachers into the profession. Any gradual down-sizing of the teaching force to align teacher numbers with pupil enrolment would need to allow for such recruitment of "new blood", both for qualitative improvements and to minimise the possibilities for even wider cycles of shortage and surplus in the medium and long term.

A further issue related to the quantitative management of the teaching force is the number and use of "external teachers", *i.e.* teachers usually hired on a part-time basis to teach in high-demand fields. Most "external teachers" are employed elsewhere, many in other teaching posts (the *Background Report* puts the share of the teaching force taking on extra teaching assignments at other schools at 10 per cent).

The present use of "external teachers", while having the advantage of permitting greater flexibility in staffing (see below), has two important potential disadvantages. Firstly, to the extent that full-time teachers also work as "external teachers", some concerns arise about the impact on effort and effectiveness in both regular and "external" teaching assignments. Secondly, "external teachers" are, by definition and determination, casual and part-time employees in the schools in which they are engaged in such a capacity. As such, they are less likely to participate fully in exchanges between teachers, administrative staff, parents, and community representatives on school priorities and

problems. However, these are matters in which all the teachers in the school, if they are to assume a new, more widely conceived professional role, will need to be involved. The issue here is a matter of degree. What is needed is balance in the use of "external teachers", and an adjustment in policies which will encourage schools and those qualified to teach to make choices which will lead to that balance.

Recurring patterns of overall teacher shortages and surpluses have been characteristic of development in the other market-economy countries of the OECD. The policy approaches adopted in these countries have often accommodated such imbalances through the unemployment or under-employment of qualified teachers, higher rates of "leakage" to other economic sectors of those who are qualified to teach (with different consequences – whether on balance positive or negative – for the economy, the allocated budget of education authorities and the schools and individuals concerned), or the recruitment of those who are less qualified or lack formal qualifications to teach (OECD, 1990; Wagner, 1994).

As is presently the case in the Czech Republic, it is common to find surpluses and shortages at the same time. According to figures provided in the *Background Report*, while 25 per cent of those newly-qualified to teach do not enter teaching (a possible indicator of excess supply, but, also of the lack of attractiveness of teaching), the ministry estimates, for example, that 7 per cent of instruction in basic schools is provided by retired teachers (presumably in geographic areas or in some specialisations where qualified teachers are not available or not willing to enter or remain in teaching).

The main problem, then, is how to align the size and composition of the teaching force with the quantitative needs generated by the development of education and training provision in the transition. As already noted, there are indications that the teaching force is too large relative to enrolment, especially at the secondary level.

In the opinion of the reviewers, policies for managing the size and composition of the teaching force are not sufficiently effective to allow and encourage a good alignment with the quantitative needs generated by the development of education and training provision in the transition. Until the present, one option has (for the most part) been effectively taken off the list of instruments available to the Ministry of Education, namely the trade-off between higher salaries with a smaller teaching force relative to school rolls (as in Japan, for example) and lower average salaries with higher levels of teacher employment. Under wage controls, the available budget has permitted the gradual increase in the size of the teaching force to accommodate the evolution of enrolment and schools at different levels and in different segments. There has been no particular policy framework for redundancy or redeployment. In this regard, the *Background Report* refers to the voluntary separation of teachers leaving education for other economic sectors, presumably due to the greater attractiveness of opportunities for employment outside of teaching.

Furthermore, there are limited opportunities for schools to depart from the salary schedule to retain teachers in high-demand fields or regions, although it was said that some private schools were doing so and that new government initiatives would permit all schools to apply additional salary increments for just such circumstances. Teachers, according to their representatives, would prefer to have higher levels of remuneration,

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even if this meant a loss in the number of teaching posts as a result of the demographic decline. While such a position may be seen as an indication of salaries too low to make teaching attractive, adjustments in teacher salaries cannot serve as the sole element of a government strategy for managing the quantitative development of the teaching force. In this regard, two suggestions can be made.

Firstly, the government might reinforce a range of more specific, targeted instruments used to influence the choices of young people to enter teacher training, newly-qualified teachers to enter teaching, current teachers to make changes to careers outside of teaching, and those in mid-career outside of teaching to enter (or return to) teaching. These instruments will need to be applied differently in the case of different levels, segments and specialisations; such is presently the case with the more or less spontaneous use of "external teachers". It should be recognised and accepted that not all young people trained to be teachers will enter the profession and that, of those who do become teachers, some – particularly those in fields in high demand in other economic sectors – will be more likely to leave after a short career in teaching. While such mobility varies in degree among OECD countries, it exists to some extent in all of them.

In particular, more sophisticated financial incentives might be used, such as implicit "contracts" for those trained at public expense to be teachers in high-demand or high-shortage fields. Newly-qualified graduates would be expected to teach for a limited number of years to "discharge" their obligation under the contract; separation from teaching prior to the completion of this service obligation would require full or *pro rata* repayment of the costs of training (adjusted to reflect current price levels). Examples of such arrangements exist in other OECD countries. Under such an approach, the capacity of teacher training or upgrading programmes should be increased beyond simple projections of needs in these high-demand fields, so as to allow for "leakage" into other employment sectors of teachers prepared or upgraded in these fields.

Secondly, while the overall objective is to achieve a gradual decline in the size of the teaching force up to the year 2000, steps should also be taken to support the redeployment of some classroom teachers among school segments (particularly, given the additional year of basic education, the redeployment of teachers from secondary to basic schools). Such steps should also support the redeployment of some classroom teachers to assume new pedagogical, monitoring, administrative and governance tasks. While this redeployment should be seen within the broad effort to introduce new, differentiated career profiles for teachers, it would have the advantage of permitting a somewhat greater recruitment of young, newly-qualified teachers into the full range of schools and classrooms. Such a redeployment may be for limited periods, and it should be linked to particular policy priorities (school-community and school-parent co-operation; school and teacher development).

Salary and conditions of work

Better salaries and conditions of work are likely to improve the relative attractiveness of education as a field of study and teaching as a career. However, the interest in

teacher salaries and conditions of work must go beyond the recruitment and retention of qualified teachers. These aspects, related to the environment of teaching, serve to motivate and dispose (or, alternatively, discourage) teachers concerning a wide range of activities in their work and, more importantly, contribute to more effective and efficient teaching.

The salary issue figures prominently in the policy debate in the Czech Republic. The monthly remuneration is about one-half that paid to policemen and about three-fourths of what the average civil servant earns. There appears to be general agreement from many quarters that teacher salaries should be increased (budget permitting) to at least the level of overall average salaries, if not higher. There was wide support and approval – on the part of people not involved, as well as that of those involved, with education – of the government's decision to apply a large share of the 1995 budget surplus to education and, more specifically, to funding a 20 per cent increase in teacher salaries. This was a greater increase than provided for public sector salaries overall, and, as such, it sent an important signal to teachers and the country as a whole about the priority accorded to education and the recognition of teachers.

It is difficult to make meaningful international comparisons of teacher pay and salary progression. However, the most recent analyses based on the OECD educational indicators data base do provide a number of measures upon which to make such comparisons. In 1992 (the most recent year available), the ratio of primary and lower secondary teacher starting salaries to gross domestic product was 1.0 in Belgium and Austria, 0.9 in the United States and 1.3 in the western *Länder* of Germany; for 15 OECD countries with comparable data, the mean ratio was 1.2 (OECD, 1995*a*). The ratio in the Czech Republic was 0.7 (in 1994).

Salary progression is signalled by the maximum teacher salary and the number of years required to reach this level. In 1992, the ratio of maximum salary to starting salary for primary and lower secondary teachers was 1.7 in Belgium, 2.3 in Austria, 1.7 in the United States and 1.4 (1.3 for lower secondary teachers) in the western *Länder* of Germany; for 15 OECD countries with comparable data, the mean ratio was 1.7 (OECD, 1995*a*). The ratio in the Czech Republic (in 1994) was 1.5. The number of years needed to reach the maximum level was 27 in Belgium, 34 in Austria, 16 in the United States and 22 (20 for lower secondary teachers) in the western *Länder* of Germany; for the 15 OECD countries with comparable data, the mean number of years was 25 for primary teachers and 24 for lower secondary teachers (OECD, 1995*a*). In the Czech Republic, the number of years needed to reach the maximum salary level in 1994 was 27.

These international comparisons reveal nothing about *differentials between* teaching and other occupations within individual countries. Those countries with relatively high levels of pay and a steep progression in salaries over time for teachers may have even more favourable pay levels and progression in other sectors and occupations. Moreover, in the Czech Republic, as in other OECD countries, people enter, remain or return to teaching for a variety of social and economic reasons.

The *Background Report*, for example, refers to the importance of "working with children" as one reason why young people want to be teachers. It is also pointed out that

teaching, unlike other occupations, provides for a two-month summer vacation and other holidays which coincide with the dates when schools are closed. In surveys undertaken in a number of other OECD countries, these aspects are seen to "compensate", to some extent, for lower pay or relatively "flat" careers in teaching (OECD, 1990). It is also true that the present mix of social and economic aspects of teaching in the Czech Republic are likely to be found more attractive to some (*e.g.* women) than others. However, if the aim is to improve the attractiveness of the profession, and the motivation and disposition of teachers to changes in their work, then other combinations of salaries, career structures, and conditions should be developed.

In this connection, the component of teacher pay set aside for a "bonus" or "premium" is of particular interest. Currently, the amounts set aside for "premium" payments represent 10 per cent of the wage bill. School directors have the scope to allocate these funds in whatever manner they think is most appropriate. The review team heard different estimates of the possible sizes of such premiums, and of the criteria used for their allocation. The typical amount of the premium appears to be in the order of a 5 per cent, one-time, increment to the salary of the teacher receiving the bonus. In one school, bonuses of as much as 20 per cent were possible. In another school, the amounts provided to the school for premium payments were divided among all teachers. With some exceptions, however, it appears that funds set aside for premium payments are not used strategically by school directors. Often, they are used to compensate teachers for taking on extra assignments which are not otherwise recognised in pay schedules. Less frequently, they are used to supplement pay for teachers in critical, high-demand fields or to reward teachers for the quality of their teaching. In these cases, the judgements passed upon quality in teaching are those of the school director.

Thus, while the reviewers believe that the possibility for differentiation in teacher salary is worthy of further development, they are not convinced that the premium component of the salary has been used in ways which promote effectiveness in teaching. Salary levels remain relatively low, even with the premium increment. Furthermore, the criteria for the allocation of the premiums are not transparent or, where transparent, include so many items as to limit the incentives introduced for one or another of the intended purposes. Finally, a clear concept underlying differentiated pay is lacking.

In addition to pay increments for extra work, consideration should be given to a greater differentiation of teacher salaries based on more clearly developed career profiles in teaching. Such profiles would reflect national standards and require some evaluation of teacher knowledge, quality in teaching and commitment to teaching.

Examples of different approaches may be found in France, Australia, Japan and the United States, each approach emerging out of its own context and embodying different concepts of teaching careers, teacher quality, preparation and responsibilities, and pay differentials. For example, the teaching profession in France includes a number of categories, with teachers holding a certain classification according to a hierarchy of examinations and evaluations. *Agrégés*, recruited through a highly competitive national examination, are the most prestigious; *certifiés*, also recruited through a national exami-

nation conferring the *CAPES*, represent the basic category, other *titulaires* are not recruited through examination, and therefore acquire civil servant status as *titulaires* only after a period in which their competence in the classroom is evaluated. Teachers holding the *agrégation* are more likely to teach at the higher levels in given subjects. Schools are assigned a certain number of posts for those holding the *agrégation*. Salary and workload differ according to category.

In the United States, on the other hand, no such differentiation exists although there recently has been a move to recognise and certify teachers who demonstrate substantial competence. The criteria and evaluation mechanisms have been developed by the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards, a voluntary, non-governmental body with representation from all stakeholders within and outside of teaching. Status as a "Board-Certified" teacher may be used by individual education authorities in establishing pay scales.

A move towards differentiated career profiles, with associated changes in preparation, responsibilities and pay, as well as performance or quality increments, would improve both the motivation and effectiveness of teachers. It would promote the development of greater willingness in teachers to make those adaptations in their practices and relations with students, other teachers, parents and the community which will improve the learning of students. In this connection, it is difficult not to agree with a School Office director who expressed the view that with the attention given to salaries, sometimes the problem of education is "left by the wayside". What is needed is an adequate, rewarding salary – and more. Some private initiatives could be found in the Czech Republic, which promoted innovative school activities on the part of teachers and others (see Chapter 6); however, these are not sufficiently numerous, nor introduced into school environments in ways which support the institutionalisation of their key changes, nor conceived broadly with the view that teachers should be encouraged and enabled to exercise fully their professional responsibilities.

Teacher preparation and continuing development

In some respects, the quality and relevance of teacher education in the Czech Republic still suffers from a lack of a sufficiently developed concept of teaching, particularly in the context of a society and economy in transition. In this respect, someone referred to the lack of a "curriculum concept" in education as a factor which weakened the position of teachers; that lack of clarity – or at least a more fully developed, broader view – also appears to be missing in teacher education. Such a concept would embrace initial and in-service teacher education, and reflect a view of the larger, professional role and responsibilities of teachers than presently seems to be the case. As already described, such a view would stress not only subject-matter knowledge, but improved preparation of teachers in subject-matter teaching and, more broadly, the development of the capacity for, and interest in continuous, lifelong learning (some self-directed), taking responsibility for what happens in classrooms and schools, working co-operatively with other teachers, school administrators, parents and various community representatives on matters of

common interest and shared responsibility, and flexible and dynamic responses (see OECD, 1996).

Overall, the impression of the reviewers was that those obtaining teacher qualifications are well prepared in subject-matter knowledge. As part of the accreditation process operating in higher education, faculties of education have recently undergone review with the result that only one of the faculties has been accredited to directly provide teacher education study programmes for all levels and segments, as well as advanced doctoral study. While there is no basis to dispute the findings of the accreditation commission, there appeared to be no input into the review process on the part of graduates, their employers (schools), and their "clients" (parents, among others). That is, the accreditation process largely reflected the scientific and research orientations of the universities. The relevance of teacher education to classroom practice needs to be given formal weight in any evaluation of programme quality.

The concern within university circles about the separation of teacher education from the subject matter discipline has been noted. In this regard, the reviewers favour the direction of initiatives such as the one taken at Charles University, where deans of the faculties with responsibilities for the preparation of teachers (*i.e.* the field and pedagogical faculties) have been requested to come together on a university-wide basis to identify areas of potential and actual overlap and to find ways to co-ordinate and co-operate in their work. Such university-wide efforts may be easier if the authority of the rector is strengthened, as was envisaged in the proposed Higher Education Act.

The implications for the development of teacher education in the Czech Republic are several, but one growth point is the development of, and inter-linkage among, a wide range of in-service training activities. This must be seen as an urgent priority for policy, because the continuing adaptation of the contexts, contents and methods of teaching to the needs, interests and expectations of young people, their parents, the economy and society as a whole requires professional development opportunities for virtually all current teachers. In addition to the courses offered by teacher centres, it will be important to take into account: advanced study at universities for experienced teachers; organised conferences; opportunities for international travel; work in professional subject-matter associations of teachers; participation of teachers in curriculum development; and school development activities.

At present, some of the activities which provide different forms of in-service training are more common than others. For example, subject-matter associations in mathematics and physics have received support from the Ministry of Education, and they offer in-service activities in their respective fields. Other subject-matter associations, *e.g.* history, civics, are less active and receive little or no support from the ministry. Subject-matter associations – specifically with the involvement of classroom teachers as well as scholars in the disciplines and teacher educators from faculties of education – could be drawn more fully into the process of continuous review and renewal of the curriculum (perhaps through contributions to the work of a National Curriculum Council or similar body, as described in Chapter 3 and Recommendation No. 5 in Chapter 8). Limited options for international activities exist; some require those selected to participate in such activities to report back to other teachers on the findings of their experiences (an important extension

of possible benefits to a larger number of teachers). School development activities are not systematically undertaken; yet, in-service education organised in relation to school-wide development has the advantage of anchoring new concepts and ideas in actual practice, as well as contributing in a very direct way to the realisation of improvements in learning outcomes identified as priorities by schools and their communities.

For this reason (among others), a proposal made by the consultative group to the ministry in its report on *The Teacher* is worthy of support; this would entail placing a substantial share of funds for in-service training in the hands of school directors, who would have the responsibility to identify the needs for in-service training (drawing on the advice and input of teachers), and to present plans to the district School Office. An approach to in-service education which is school- and teacher-initiated is to be preferred to an approach relying solely on initiatives from pedagogical centres or university faculties. Providers of training activities should be engaged from anywhere inside or outside the education system.

However, such an approach requires certain conditions for its effective implementation and functioning, including:

- An extended role and developed expertise on the part of school directors, teachers and the school staff as a whole in identifying needs and proposing appropriate programmes. In one school, all teachers were encouraged to develop their own career and related professional development plan as part of a process of annual review. The teachers' plan was considered in relation to the overall development objectives and priorities for the school. Such an approach seems quite reasonable and appropriate; it needs to be featured in all schools.
- A new role for pedagogical centres, to assist schools and teachers in the development of plans (rather than what appears to be the orientation of work in the centres now operating, namely to formulate a programme of "off-the-shelf" course modules).
- Provision of accessible information on forms and initiatives in this area, and system-wide co-ordination and management of the effort. Frameworks, information, advice, pass-through funding and co-ordination would be made available on a system-wide basis, on the authority of the Ministry of Education. The Inspectorate already plays an important role in this field, most particularly in the evaluation and assessment of schools and teachers. Partly owing to the ongoing process of redefining the Inspectorate's role in the period following the political changes of 1989, and partly to the possible tensions between providing a diagnostic service for the formative benefit of schools and teachers, and serving as a source of external summative evaluations and policy advice for the ministry, the Inspectorate as presently configured seems poorly equipped to play a system-wide co-ordinating and advisory role in the field of teacher in-service (see, also, the discussion in Chapter 6 and Recommendation No. 9). Various other models of entities which could be adapted towards both teacher assessment and evaluation and the co-ordination of teacher education may be found in Scotland and British Columbia (Teaching Councils), the United States (National Board of Professional Teaching Standards) and England (Teacher Training Agency).

Conclusions

Altogether, what is required to reinforce quality in the teaching force is a strategic view of teacher policies in relation to aims for the overall development of education and training in the Czech Republic. Such a strategic view would require a strong role for the Ministry of Education in building a consensus on the crucial role of teachers, establishing the overall goals and ensuring co-ordination and coherence among a set of teacher policies covering pay, career paths, recruitment, initial teacher preparation, and in-service education.

In the realisation of such an approach, government policy should give priority to three specific needs. Firstly, in-service training provision should be expanded and offered within a framework which is more flexible and targeted to both the needs of schools, in their responses to challenges in an economy and society in transition, and the needs linked to the development of new career profiles and new responsibilities for teachers. Secondly, there is a need to reinforce overall levels of teacher pay, continuing the priority already accorded by the government in its allocation of the budget surplus in August 1995. Thirdly, there is a need to develop more fully a framework in which policies for recruitment, retention, redeployment and retirement are co-ordinated and take into account the scope provided to each school (and school director) to establish its own staff profile.

Chapter 6

EFFECTIVE ADMINISTRATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

The political changes in 1989 opened the way for widespread changes in educational administration and governance. The distribution of administrative responsibilities between the "centre", local communities and schools has been reshaped, with the consequence of greater autonomy at the local and school levels. The transformation process is still far from complete. Further changes in public administration are being discussed, and the new structures in place for education administration and governance continue to evolve.

The main changes can be summarised as follows. Until 1989, public administration in former Czechoslovakia was based on a four-level system of municipal, district, territorial and national authorities. There were elected bodies and administrative departments at all levels. Theoretically, as in most CEECs, this system followed the principle of *local and territorial responsibility*. In reality, however, the system was highly centralised, with national-level branch ministries directly administering different institutional activities and functions and a centralised, single political party exercising an external control at all levels and in all matters. The direct administration of education by the national ministry was assured by the so-called *double subordination* of the local and territorial administrative departments to the elected local and territorial bodies and to the Ministry. Following the political change in 1989, the municipal-level administration became self-governing, the former elected bodies at district level were suppressed, and the different local administrative departments were transferred to the relevant branch ministries (in the case of education, to the Ministry of Education). Elected councils and administrative departments of the higher-level territorial bodies were entirely dissolved.

The most important effects of these changes in the system of educational administration can be summarised as follows:

- Educational administration has been separated from general public administration and from other administrative sectors, thus making the co-ordination of different policy areas (e.g. education policy and labour-market or social policy) a difficult and complex task.
- At the municipal level, responsibilities are shared between politically autonomous self-governments and the local branches of national ministries. Because the

municipalities have gained responsibility only in the area of basic education, the administration of basic and secondary education is now separated.

– The sharing of responsibilities between self-governing local bodies and national authorities raises the question of how to harmonise local and national policies with various local interests. The question of how to formulate and implement a coherent education policy for basic and secondary education must be examined in the light of this change.

Setting the basic goals

Policy documents recently issued by the Ministry, give considerable attention to governance and management. In *Quality and Accountability*, the Czech government expresses its intent to stabilise the system and to "establish clear rules which will not stifle initiative and creativity". The main objective is to set a new balance between, on the one hand, the autonomy of schools and individual teachers and, on the other, the responsibility of public authorities for assuring the efficiency and quality of educational services.

The task of setting this balance is particularly delicate in a country where the memory of central political control of all aspects of education is recent and strong, and where the newly-acquired autonomy of schools and teachers is still fragile. There seems to be a growing consensus that the assurance of considerable freedom for schools and teachers can be sustained in the long term only if the standards and rules for all individuals – students, teachers, officials and other parties – are well defined.

Given the delicate nature of the new balance between autonomy and responsibility, it is useful to call attention to the danger of simplistic approaches. A typical form of such an approach would be to try to find in what measure local and school-level autonomy should be cut and in what measure central control strengthened in order to ensure quality and effectiveness. Rather, in this context, it would be more useful to identify what kind of central policy goals and means can be used to good effect in a context of local and school level autonomy, and what kind of new co-ordination mechanisms are needed in order to achieve these goals. In short, management, administration and governance of education should provide for self-regulatory mechanisms for quality and efficiency. This formulation of the rationales and orientation of a purposeful policy approach is similar to the view expressed by some senior officials in the Ministry of Education.

The current system of education administration needs to be assessed, and recommendations for its improvement developed, in relation to a set of key questions:

- How far do administrative structures and arrangements assure the effective use of resources?
- Are they adequate for the implementation of centrally-defined policies?
- How much can they foster quality and the further development of pedagogical activities in schools?
- To what extent do they accommodate and resolve those conflicts and tensions which emerge in all modern education systems?

Educational administration at the national level

At the central level, the definition of the tasks and internal organisation of the Ministry of Education is a crucial issue. In the past, the definition of policy priorities and the design and implementation of policy were not part of its tasks. All important decisions were taken by political bodies outside the ministry. The ministry was responsible for executing the decisions. During the past few years, a number of steps have been taken in order to adapt the internal organisation and the operation of the Ministry of Education to the reality of political democracy, self-governing local communities and school-level autonomy. Nevertheless, as observed in the *Background Report*, the ministry still concentrates its work on short-term operational tasks.

Ministerial departments devote much of their time and energy to the direct handling of the problems of individual secondary schools. The ministry is responsible for the selection and the appointment of several hundred directors of secondary schools, and for the schools' budgetary and financial problems. Also, all conflicts which cannot be solved locally are pushed up to the national level. Therefore, time and energy are not available for work on long-term, strategic issues, such as analysing processes, system-wide results and failings, establishing mechanisms for quality assurance, defining general legal rules, forecasting future changes and, most important, setting priorities for development.

The need for the ministry to play a strategic role is fully understood and recognised by senior officials, and concrete steps have been taken to overcome major shortcomings. The ministry has established new units to carry out analysis and strategy development for the system as a whole and the tasks and responsibilities of other support institutions have been modified with this objective in mind. Nevertheless, progress is limited, and most of the recommendations formulated on the operations of the ministry by previous reviews or technical assistance teams remain valid.

A particularly difficult task of education policy in countries in transition is the restoration of appropriate democratic bodies and decision-making procedures at the central level. Two often contradictory requirements have to be met: on the one hand, structures and arrangements need to be established to secure a representation and assertion for different partner and stakeholder interests and, on the other, means for efficient decision-making has to be promoted. In the judgment of the review team, many strategic issues in education require broad consultation in the course of policy development and implementation. In a number of OECD countries, there is at least one national-level consultative body which expresses and reconciles the professional and social interests of the main partners in education. Commonly, the function and composition of such bodies are defined by law. In the Czech Republic, the creation of a consultative body of this type would bring stability to educational policy-making.

There are two areas in which the importance of legally constituted consultative bodies seems not to be sufficiently recognised. One is curriculum development (already discussed in Chapter 3); the other is communication with municipal self-governments. If self-governing municipalities are to play a greater role in educational policy and policy-implementation, they must be involved in every stage of the policy process. Two difficulties prevent effective involvement: the weakness and the over-politicisation of the

existing municipal assemblies, and the municipalities' lack of interest and competency in educational issues. The Ministry of Education and the research community could assist municipal associations in developing the necessary competence to enhance the professionalism of municipal administration in this area.

At the national level, there is a need for improved co-ordination among the ministries and government agencies concerned in policy development and implementation. Inter-ministerial agencies are seldom effective in a context of decentralised decision-making. In the opinion of the review team, the solution lies in the establishment of intermediate (regional) bodies which would provide a suitable echelon for integrating the activities of various ministries and agencies with responsibilities in the education field. These intermediate or regional bodies would be entrusted with the supervision of secondary schools, thus alleviating the Ministry of Education of such detailed operational tasks. In a way, this would amount to a return to the structure which prevailed prior to 1990, when secondary schools were managed by territorial bodies. The scope and nature of the responsibilities of the new intermediate-regional bodies would be different, however.

Local-level administration

The responsibilities for local administration of education in the Czech Republic are currently shared between self-governing municipalities and the district School Offices, which are subordinated directly to the Ministry of Education. Municipalities are the founders of kindergartens and basic schools, and they are responsible for covering the maintenance costs (building repairs, energy, catering services, etc.) of these institutions. Although there are about 6 000 municipalities, not all of them choose to maintain schools.

The district School Offices represent the ministry at the local (or, more precisely, at lower territorial) level. The most important function of these offices are the allocation of teacher salaries, the appointment of basic school directors and the general co-ordination of provision of education in each district. District School Offices also manage the financial affairs of schools which have no independent legal standing.

The district School Offices are the most important units of school administration at local level. They play a strategic role in the implementation of national education policy and the management of basic education. Meetings with district School Office directors left the reviewers with the impression that School Offices are often much more than simple executive agencies of state educational administration. They are active in setting district-level priorities, and they have the discretionary power to redistribute resources according to these priorities. If (as is planned) the funding from the Ministry of Education to the district School Offices takes the form of a lump sum, and as the offices (as is already the case) can define local redistribution rules, their potential influence could grow. From this perspective, the way in which the district-level budget is allocated to different schools (and by extension also to different municipalities which run these schools) becomes a key issue.

A key challenge faced by district School Offices is the increasing role of self-governing local municipalities in basic education. Municipalities already have extensive and substantial responsibilities in this area. According to the law on education administration, they are responsible for creating basic education provision. They can make agreements with other municipalities to provide common services and they define the enrolment areas of individual schools. Consent from the municipal authorities is required for appointing or dismissing school directors. Municipalities have a decisive role in conferring legal standing to schools which they administer, a decision which has a strong impact on the relationship between schools and School Offices. Municipalities have the right to discuss school budgets and the conditions of education within their district with other maintainers of schools. They can also discuss the results of education in their schools.

The municipalities of a given district also have collective rights. For instance, through their representatives on the district school board, they can discuss not only the district development strategy but also the activities of the district School Office. Municipalities can request the replacement of the district office director. According to the latest amendment to the law on education administration (summer 1995), district School Offices have to prepare an annual report on the state and development of education in the district. This annual report must be approved at a meeting of the mayors of the competent municipalities. The allocation of resources also is discussed by many informal consultative bodies, consisting mainly of school directors.

District school boards include representatives of the municipalities, teachers and parents. Surprisingly, the law gives considerable discretion to the director of the School Office in the establishment of these bodies. For instance, if the municipalities do not nominate members to the board, the School Office director may appoint members to represent them. Until now, these mechanisms seem to have been appropriate for the reconciliation of different interests. There is no evidence of major conflicts and those conflicts arising have been handled within the existing frameworks. The ease with which conflicts have been handled may be explained by the lack of severe budget problems, as allocations from the state budget have been sufficient to meet most of the urgent demands. This situation may be altered if, as a consequence of the demographic decline, the existing facilities or the teaching labour force are to be re-deployed in certain localities, or if state budgetary policy for public services becomes tighter.

In the examination of the relationship between district School Offices and municipalities, an important distinction needs to be made between large towns and smaller villages. The allocation of resources among schools in large towns is much simpler than in smaller villages, because decisions do not have any impact on inter-municipality relations. School provision at both the basic and secondary levels is less likely to require rationalisation in those school districts which cover larger towns. According to the law on self-government, municipalities are supposed to prepare local development *concepts*. In the case of larger towns, these may take the form of urban planning in the broad sense of the term, including the long-term planning of educational facilities as well. It is possible, therefore, to increase even further the responsibility and the competencies of municipal governments for the overall planning of educational provision in the larger urban areas. However, on the basis of discussions with a number of those concerned, caution appears

to be required about development in this area. Municipal self-government is still developing, and the capacities for integrated planning of social services are limited. Nonetheless, in the long term, larger towns could be given full responsibility for maintaining and managing basic and secondary education, including both general and technical-vocational schools.

In rural areas, basic school provision is a sensitive issue. The advantages of the small "village school" (and it must be recalled that in the first years after the political change in 1989, many of these schools were spontaneously created) in terms of the quality of teaching and learning outcomes, as well as the larger role played by the school in the local community must be weighed against the disadvantages, such as limited range of programme provision, poor equipment and high unit costs. There is no standard advice which can be given on this matter. It may be useful to look at the experience of other OECD countries faced with the depopulation of rural areas and a declining demography. Regional pooling of material and personnel resources between small schools may provide part of the solution.

In the case of smaller villages which are not able to provide full (lower *and* upper levels) basic education, a strategy of inter-village co-operation and "networking" between schools should be pursued. The practice of villages running schools with only lower primary classes, some with no more than five classes, is quite common in the Czech Republic. Current legislation makes it possible for municipalities to co-operate in this area; there is even provision for sharing the costs of facilities used in common. Such co-operation should be encouraged by the creation of appropriate legal and financial incentives. For instance, the procedures by which municipalities can contribute financially to the maintenance of schools which are run by other municipalities but admit pupils from their area, could be better defined and special support for these schools could be provided.

A regional level?

The review team recognises that the establishment of new, higher-level regional administrative units is not a matter of education administration alone, but rather would be part of a broader reform of public administration in the Czech Republic. In the case of education, these administrative units would have overall responsibility for general secondary and technical-vocational education, including the planning of facilities and the provision of evaluation and support services.

Such new regional administrative units should establish relationships with regional-level, self-governing bodies on the one hand, and with other administrative branches of public administration, on the other. Given that a guiding principle of the reform of public administration, besides the principle of decentralising competencies, is to integrate various branches of this administration, there is the possibility that regional units of education administration could become part of an integrated regional administrative service governed by an elected self-governing body. Such a development would greatly alter the conditions for education administration and policy implementation in the Czech Republic.

The management of autonomous schools

Since 1990, all secondary schools and many of the larger basic schools have become legal entities with enlarged responsibilities for their internal organisation, study programmes and resource management. Many decisions with far-reaching repercussions on the quality of education and on the efficiency of the use of human and material resources are now taken at school level. The problems arising in connection with school autonomy and curriculum development have already been identified and discussed (see Chapter 3). Here, the focus of the discussion are the implications for school management in the areas of financial resources, personnel and school-environment relationships.

The first important aspect of school-level autonomy concerns the management of financial resources. As legal entities, schools may have their own bank account and raise funds which can be used for purposes determined at the school level. These schools' income may originate from three sources: directly from the central budget, in the case of secondary schools, or through the ministry's district School Offices in the case of basic schools; from funds provided by municipalities; and from other, self-generated sources. Although no data is available about the relative shares of these three income sources, the reviewers believe that the importance of the last two should increase. Furthermore, it is believed that the relative shares of these three sources of budget income differ greatly among schools. Amounts from each of the three funding sources will vary according to the way district offices redistribute state normatives among schools, the capacity and willingness of municipalities to spend money on education, and the ability of schools to raise extra funds.

The central budget contribution actually transferred to schools may vary between 90 and 110 per cent of the calculated average normative – a nationally-set per capita grant – as a result of negotiations between the school and the district School Office. In principle, the normative is sufficient to finance salaries and all of the running costs of the institutions. In practice, however, the normatives set by the state are not always sufficient to finance all of a school's activities. Building on local community interests, the school director may persuade municipal authorities to sustain the full range of activities by making additional contributions to salary costs, as well as towards the development and maintenance of school buildings. Subsidies from municipalities for running or investment costs are not centrally determined but depend on local conditions and, to an undetermined extent, on the bargaining capacity of the school director.

In some large schools helped by supportive municipalities and run by entrepreneurial directors, the municipal and other income sources may almost match the funds provided through state normative funding. Schools can sell different services, some of which are educational (e.g. adult training courses) whereas others are not directly linked to education (e.g. organising cultural programmes, renting accommodation facilities or selling products). Some technical schools in the hotel and catering sector are very effective in selling services. The review team believes that the increasing number of schools with financial autonomy is a positive development which will contribute both to a more efficient use of resources and to increasing the overall levels of resources available for schooling. It should be stressed, however, that the expansion of autonomy in this area

has to be accompanied by a better preparation of school directors in matters of school finance and the development of reliable accounting procedures.

The second area where schools have increased autonomy is the management of the teaching force. Teachers in the Czech Republic are employed by individual schools. School directors may, therefore, have a major influence on teachers' earnings (via bonuses), work loads, promotions and opportunities for professional development (see Chapter 5). According to the *Background Report*, the typical relationship between directors and their staff is, on the whole, balanced. The purely autocratic style is as rare as the purely participatory one. In practice, the comparatively strong position of school directors relative to their staff seems to be accepted, and the effects of such an arrangement appear, on balance, positive. Nonetheless, while such a formal assignment of responsibilities can be accepted, a more collegial approach and a leadership style which puts more stress on teamwork and "partnership" could be fostered.

A third aspect of school autonomy concerns the management of relationships between schools and their environment. If schools are to become more dependent on local community support, there is a need for an established institutional framework for school-community relations. In the Czech Republic, the means for such relationships is the School Council. The legal basis for establishing School Councils was set down in the 1995 amendment to the Education Act. School Councils are required to include representatives of the "founder", the parents and the teaching staff. The uneven experience with School Councils in a number of OECD countries must be noted. Nonetheless, in this respect the advantages outweigh the disadvantages, and no other obvious vehicle for fostering strong, active, school-community relationships exists.

At present, the establishment of a School Council is not compulsory; it must be formed only at the request of one (or more) of the three partners. The reviewers believe that, while this voluntary approach is a good solution in the relatively short period of transition, regulation or other incentives should be used to bring about the establishment of School Councils in every school.

The 1995 amendment of the Education Act also introduces a requirement for public reporting on school activities to parents. It would be worthwhile to extend such reporting to include planning (*e.g.* the *projet d'école* in France) and to use it strategically to develop and strengthen the relationship between the school and its community.

Support services

Support services in education fulfil the same function as the nervous system in the human body: they are effective only if they are properly linked both with higher-level management of the education system and with schools. In the opinion of the reviewers, general dialogue and daily co-operation between existing support services and the ministry is much less problematic in the Czech Republic than in some other CEECs. This is partly due to the relatively high level of consensus about the basic goals of educational policy which characterises Czech society in general and the professional community in particular. Such a consensus creates highly favourable conditions for co-operation, based

on partnership and mutual respect, and for the implementation of policies. Still, further progress could be made to fully exploit the capacities and expertise resident in various support institutions. What is needed is a clarification of the channels of communication, a set of clear negotiating procedures and, the establishment of clearly delineated, complementary functions with relevant long and medium-term objectives for each of the support services.

The capacity of support services to meet the needs of schools is more problematic. Understaffing, lack of focus and concentration of resources at a particular level of school administration, among others, account for the limited capacity of existing support services to assist individual schools in addressing basic issues.

The Inspectorate

Experience in the OECD suggests that school autonomy requires systematic monitoring and evaluation. In the Czech Republic, school evaluation is carried out by the Inspectorate, a national agency created subsequently to the political change in 1989, with approximately 400 staff positions (inspectors), of which 50 posts have not yet been filled. Two questions are currently being debated concerning the Inspectorate. What is its function? What is its relationship with school administration?

At present, the Inspectorate pursues three types of evaluation and control activities. It evaluates individual schools (which accounts for approximately half of the Inspectorate's work). Also, the Inspectorate evaluates and analyses special topics or areas (about one-fifth of its work). Finally, the Inspectorate investigates problems and issues on the request of school authorities. Although the function of providing pedagogical support for individual teachers and schools is not excluded from the job description of inspectors, the Inspectorate's activity in this area is rather limited (see Chapter 5).

With respect to evaluation activities, the reviewers believe that a clear division of labour should be maintained between the evaluation of pupils' learning achievements, and school and system evaluation. The former would fall within the remit of an agency for educational assessment responsible for monitoring the results of the teaching or learning process (see Chapter 4). School and system evaluation would be the main function of the Inspectorate. Pedagogical support of teachers and schools would be left to the various layers of school administration (Ministry of Education, the proposed intermediate-regional level and district School Offices), which have a far wider scope than the Inspectorate (see Chapter 5).

This division of labour is viable, provided a few conditions are met. Firstly, the capacity of school administration to provide pedagogical support services must be enhanced. Without such a capacity, the needs of teachers and schools for pedagogical support could be addressed to the Inspectorate (although the Inspectorate lacks the resource base needed to meet these needs). The second condition concerns the staffing of the Inspectorate, both in terms of quantity and quality. School evaluation requires teamwork and a high degree of expertise. System evaluation is even more demanding in terms of independence from lobbies, authoritative judgement and capacity to engage in constructive dialogue. Even if its present staff was significantly increased, the Inspectorate

would not be in a position to satisfy the growing need for the evaluation of individual schools. It could, however, call on external expertise from faculties of education or research institutes. A smaller and well-trained national staff would then be able to concentrate on system-level evaluation and in-depth analysis of specific problem areas according to the needs of national-level authorities and other clients.

From an institutional perspective, the Inspectorate currently functions as an independent body with a semi-academic character and with prerogatives similar to those of universities. Its relationship with the Ministry of Education is poorly defined. In the opinion of the reviewers, this is not a tenable situation. A more effective "positioning" is desirable, and two possible alternative approaches can be suggested. Firstly, the Inspectorate could remain a state agency with a well-defined work programme assigned by the ministry. An alternative is that the Inspectorate develops into a kind of public consultancy agency providing services for different types of clients (including schools, district School Offices, local authorities and others) in co-operation or competition with other organisations having similar expertise. There are already some signs of a move towards the latter approach. It may happen, for instance, that the Inspectorate conducts an evaluative study at the request of a local government body which wants to start a major school investment project. Such requests will be more frequent in the future, as pressure to rationalise provision increases.

Pedagogical support

Demands for pedagogical support services are high, and logically they could be addressed by district School Offices. However, these offices do not have the ability to respond to these demands, because they fall outside their main responsibilities for financing and administration. District School Offices are not prepared to provide either in-service training to teachers or professional information and materials to schools, as they currently lack the means and mandate to provide such services. However, they are well positioned to play a co-ordinating and financing role in this area and to allocate resources for them according to the needs of the schools they supervise. These offices and the proposed intermediate-regional administrative units could be given a more active role in the provision of pedagogical support services.

Information

The major responsibility for data collection and information resides with the Institute for Information in Education which is an independent institute, but subordinated to the Ministry of Education. In addition to the annual publication of basic data on schools, the Institute provides upon request relevant statistical information on key issues relating to policy-making and implementation. However, such information seldom goes beyond simple description; analyses and forecasts are lacking. The ministry has taken steps to introduce substantial changes in the extent and method of data collection and to strengthen the analytical capacity of the Institute. This report supports the directions

already taken, and suggests that more extensive international contacts and co-operation might be used to accelerate development in this area.

Research

While a full account of the present state of education research in the Czech Republic was beyond the remit of this review, it appears that it is unevenly developed and not yet contributing in full measure to policy or practice. A few independent institutes, located mostly in Prague, are active in the field. Some faculties of education, especially that of Charles University, have a great potential as providers of expertise and field research, but are not sufficiently used by education authorities. Contractual working relationships aimed at using research as a support for decision-making are not yet established at any level. Contacts between Czech education research and international research bodies appear to be developing, sometimes with the benefit of foreign financial assistance.

Management training

The importance of management training at central, local and school levels seems to be widely recognised in the Czech Republic. A number of efforts have already been made to initiate management training of inspectors, School Office directors and school leaders. International co-operation also has been used for this purpose. However, the task is immense, as almost all middle and higher level education leaders have been appointed after 1990, and only a few of them have received specialised training. Additional efforts are needed, and the activities of the different agencies (Ministry of Education, universities, in-service teacher training centres, etc.) should be better co-ordinated. In addition to training, the professionalism of education management can be enhanced through the work of professional associations, the encouragement of peer control mechanisms and the reinforcement of the management aspects in the evaluation of schools.

Chapter 7

VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The inherited system

As in all other CEECs, the Czech education system has inherited a pre-dominance of vocational education and training at the level of secondary education. Available figures differ slightly, but until 1989, approximately 85 per cent of all basic-school leavers entered VOTEC schools. The number of pupils entering secondary general schools (*gymnasia*) in 1994 was still under 16 per cent. VOTEC has long accounted for the vast majority of young people. It still does today, although some shifts are taking place between different streams of VOTEC – a development to be further discussed in this report.

The particular characteristics of VOTEC in the former system have been well described in the *Background Report*. The two main types of schools, the secondary technical schools (*střední odborné školy*) and the secondary vocational schools (*střední odborná učiliště*) provided occupation-specific and narrow education and training for, respectively, technician (white collar and middle-level management) and manual worker (blue collar) occupations, as they were defined by the Ministry of Education in the catalogue of vocational specialisations.

The VOTEC system relied on a long pre-war tradition and was considered to be of a good standard, although in practice it was full of contradictions which considerably decreased its effectiveness and efficiency. The numbers of students for each course were decided centrally, on the basis of the manpower-needs forecasts of enterprises. Students did not have free choice of education but, at least for the first qualification, secondary education was free of charge. Yet, while graduates had guaranteed employment in the occupation for which they graduated, occupational mobility among young workers was high, indicating both dissatisfaction with the principle of mandatory assignment to an educational course and the willingness among enterprises to employ anybody, regardless of initial study course.

There was also strict control over the educational process through centralised curricula decisions, uniform textbooks and syllabi, as well as control of teaching methods and teachers. At the same time, however, output control was under the responsibility of schools, each one setting the contents of its examination. The result was a wide variety in

the quality of graduates among schools. However, as schools were preparing young people for specific enterprises and as regional mobility was limited, the absence of a common standard did not cause major problems. The School Inspectorate had a controlling function, and was largely political and ideological in nature. More favourable conditions for employment were encountered in the VOTEC system itself than in secondary general education, partly for ideological reasons.

Such were the characteristics of VOTEC until 1989. They were very much in accordance with the employment practices of a centrally-planned economy, but ill-suited to the changing needs of a market economy. The expectations for VOTEC from an employment system, functioning in a market economy with private enterprises competing on the basis of costs and quality of products and services, are obviously different. In the Czech case, labour markets are themselves still under development. Although the process of privatisation is almost complete, industrial restructuring and the modernisation of enterprises are still in their initial stages, and production quality and levels remain relatively low.

The changes attributable to the transition are augmented by changes arising from increased competition on world markets and technological advances, which have made traditional forms of production and services obsolete. These latter developments affect employment patterns in other OECD countries too, where authorities are undertaking sometimes radical overhauls of their VOTEC systems. It is against this background that developments in Czech VOTEC need to be appraised.

Changing the structure of VOTEC

Since 1989, the Czech authorities have initiated a series of changes in the structure of VOTEC which can be regarded partly as an attempt to overcome some of the rigidities of the inherited system and partly to introduce some features of VOTEC systems present in OECD countries (in line with some of the recommendations from the EU PHARE-sponsored *Strategic Review of Vocational Education and Training*, as well as from an earlier OECD *Review of Higher Education in the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic*). The most important measures are the following:

- the introduction of freedom of educational choice for primary school leavers;
- the abolition of state monopoly in education and the free establishment of private schools;
- the change in the status of vocational schools;
- the introduction of more internal flexibility between the two main VOTEC streams;
- the extension of VOTEC to the post-secondary level through the creation of higher professional schools.

The number and scope of innovations which these measures have encouraged are impressive. Clearly, the Ministry of Education has adopted the policy of letting schools and teachers be primarily responsible for modernisation and structural innovations. They

have been given extensive discretion and some degree of political and financial support to break up what was a rigid, centralised and ideologically controlled system. Many schools have used the possibilities offered and have invested considerable time and energy to improve structures or to develop new ones. Students now have a much wider and open VOTEC structure at their disposal and much more choice and freedom in their educational paths.

However, after six years of allowing innovations at the school level without much interference or control by central authorities, it is now time to reflect upon the results of this strategy, to evaluate and assess the intended and unintended effects, and to decide if the strategy needs to be revised. On the basis of what was seen and heard during the visit of the reviewers, it appears urgent to modify the nature of this strategy so that the structure of VOTEC will become more transparent, more cohesive and sustainable. The ministry has come to this conclusion as well, and some of the comments included in this report may support current policy thinking.

Free choice of education and the development of technical schools

Since 1989, freedom of choice at the end of compulsory schooling has led to a dramatic decline in enrolment in vocational schools, which provide courses leading to the apprenticeship certificate, and a corresponding increase in enrolment in technical schools, which offer curricula leading to the *Maturita*. In technical schools, the demand for courses leading to tertiary or services occupations is apparently stronger than for courses leading to industrial or technical occupations. This redistribution of enrolment, reflecting both the rise of technician occupations and the progressive "tertiarisation" of the Czech economy, is well in line with developments in other OECD countries.

The role of private schools

The majority of privately-established schools are in the secondary technical school sector. This is a development unique to the Czech Republic, as private schools in other CEECs emerged mainly at the primary level or in the secondary general sector.

A combination of factors explains this development. State schools were very slow to react to newly-emerging requirements of the labour market, especially in business administration, services and tourism. This gap was quickly filled by private schools. Private secondary technical schools were also established in traditional industrial sectors, very often by teachers and in close collaboration with industry.

Moreover, the growth of private schools in this sector needs to be seen as a response to young people's aspirations. Access to secondary technical schools was always considered attractive, since it provided the combination of an occupational qualification (at technician level) with the *Maturita*, and general education. In addition, technician occupations were more attractive than manual work, although salaries for the latter were slightly better. However, the number of places at secondary technical schools always fell short of demand. Hence, until 1989, the majority of basic school leavers were forced to

enter secondary vocational schools. The shift in enrolment into secondary technical schools reflects a balancing of provision with (pent-up) student interests.

While private schools have undoubtedly played a major role in changing VOTEC structures in the initial transition years, the examiners have encountered several phenomena which invite a critical evaluation of recent developments. Three related issues will be discussed here briefly: financing, quality of provision and competition between schools.

Private schools have benefited from the same financial arrangements as state schools. In addition, they were able to elicit, through a series of measures, financial contributions from students and their parents. These contributions were necessary to cover investments, since state funding only covered teachers' salaries and the running costs of schools. The various implications of existing funding policies are discussed elsewhere (Chapters 2, 5 and 6). One result, however, is that schools now seek to attract as many students as possible. They may do so by offering an attractive educational package, or by lowering the criteria for access. This would not be a problem if reliable quality control existed, both with respect to the functioning of schools and the quality of their final output. Again, these matters have been discussed in detail elsewhere. It suffices to mention that the absence of a system of educational standards, combined to a standardised examination system, weakens overall VOTEC provision as well. The main control exercised by the authorities is still through approval of the curricula (see below).

One of the most important arguments of the government in support of the establishment of private schools is that such schools create a truly competitive environment encouraging state schools to change quickly as well. It seems that this argument has proven only partially valid. As mentioned before, private schools were the first to fill the gaps in the inherited VOTEC system. A question to ask in this respect is to what extent these gaps have now been closed and whether there is still room for state schools to expand into the gaps. Furthermore, there are signs that an unbalanced structure of provision is developing, with over-supply in sectors which are popular and in demand on the market and, perhaps, under-supply in sectors which are less popular, but need a well educated work force as well. Such a situation will persist, in the absence of frameworks and arrangements capable of bringing about overall coherence of local or regional provision of education.

More importantly, however, there is no provision to monitor the qualitative experiences of private schools and to use these for the modernisation of state schools. At the local and regional levels, schools are competing for students and tend not to show much interest in coherence and co-ordination of overall provision development. With memories of the recent past still fresh, there is also much resistance against interference from higher levels in the system. There is a risk that private schools and state schools develop into separate sub-systems (a tendency which may even be strengthened by the fact that private schools have their own national association). The reviewers had the impression that officials in the Ministry of Education are now less favourable towards the development of private schools, while private schools increasingly refuse interference from the Ministry.

It is probably true that there are good private and good state schools, just as there are bad private and bad state schools. Apart from the fact that VOTEC will soon become financially unsustainable, the reviewers believe that the present situation risks creating a

waste of resources (if that risk has not already become reality). At present, opportunities to take advantage of innovative experiences in private schools for the modernisation of VOTEC at large are being wasted.

The future status of secondary vocational schools

Unlike other CEECs, the government of the Czech Republic did not abandon secondary vocational schools (and their students) to the new market forces. All apprentice schools (now called secondary vocational schools) formerly belonging to enterprises were placed temporarily under the responsibility of the Ministry of Economy; their operational costs continued to be financed from the state budget. Students unable to secure sponsorship from an enterprise are financed from the state budget and are known as "state apprentices". The number of state apprentices has gradually increased contrary to initial expectations, and the Ministry of Economy has come under some criticism for not being able to prevent this.

It should be no surprise that the sectors undergoing expansion, such as the retail trade, provide sufficient numbers of apprentice places, while traditional industrial sectors are presently rather reluctant to do so, partly because there is no guarantee that the apprentices they sponsor will start work with them after finishing their studies. While some enterprises are willing to become involved (both financially and practically) in vocational education, they may do so in order to restore traditional relationships or to combat their own, specific labour shortages, or both. However, secondary vocational schools can no longer provide initial vocational education to satisfy the labour needs of certain enterprises. The demands have become too uncertain and too variable. As the present practice with regard to state apprentices has parallels in other OECD countries (e.g. Denmark and Germany), it may be concluded that there is a structural problem which is unlikely to be solved by maintaining old structures. While there are other considerations at stake (such as preventing high levels of youth unemployment), sooner or later other solutions will have to be found. Individual schools cannot be expected to come up with such alternatives.

Secondary vocational schools, once the central feature of the VOTEC system, now run the risk of becoming the least appreciated type of education. These schools now suffer from a combination of often contradictory developments. There is considerable interest in continuing to have a type of vocational education which, in the continental European tradition, offers a combination of theoretical and practical learning, and hence to involve close co-operation between schools and enterprises, at the level of skilled occupations. However, the traditional narrowness and sector specificity of courses have come under criticism. Importantly, the criticisms arise more from the side of external observers and educational policy makers than from enterprises. While the external observers and policy makers refer to trends in employment and education in OECD countries, enterprises are still interested in ready-trained workers and tend to view a broadening and "generalising" of vocational education with scepticism. This poses a dilemma for the role of secondary vocational schools: are they intended to provide qualifications for skilled workers which are recognised by enterprises, or should they

provide a broad vocational education at secondary level, with an occupational qualification to be achieved afterwards at the post-secondary level or even during in-firm training.

Policy thinking on this matter is not clear. On the one hand, the Ministry has followed the recommendations of the EC PHARE-sponsored *Strategic Review of Vocational Education and Training*, which tends to favour the second option. With the development of proposed "integrated schools" the government may well move towards the abolition of a separate institution geared at skilled worker qualifications. This is much in line with existing patterns in such OECD countries as Australia, Japan, the United States, and the United Kingdom.

On the other hand, however, there is also question of changing the institution-based system, which differentiates secondary vocational schools from secondary technical schools, into a system which distinguishes levels of qualification (Level 1: unskilled and semi-skilled; Level 2: skilled; Level 3: technician, etc.), and which would lead to another type of relationship between the different schools. This would be more in line with the VOTEC patterns found in a number of continental European OECD countries. Policy-making is made more difficult, due to the fact that different Ministries are now responsible for both types of school and because other stakeholders are not involved in these discussions.

Increased flexibility between the two main VOTEC streams

While the inherited VOTEC system provided for 85 per cent of basic school leavers, it channelled them into rigid and narrow educational streams and specialisations. Possibilities to transfer from one type of vocational education to another were limited, not only because student quotas were decided centrally but also because schools were considered as belonging to the specialised technical ministries and, in the case of the secondary vocational schools, were directly attached to industrial enterprises. In addition, access to schools was possible only after passing an entrance examination. Since it was difficult to change educational profile, occupational mobility among young workers was relatively high. Large state-owned enterprises usually had their own internal training centres to provide retraining for their workers, or they sponsored retraining through participation in "distance learning", *i.e.* rather part-time learning facilities offered by vocational and technical schools.

A series of measures have been taken to increase the possibilities for horizontal and vertical mobility for students. Apart from changes in curricula (discussed below), this has consisted in the creation of new types of education institutions. As already mentioned, with PHARE support, a number of secondary vocational schools are being transformed into "integrated schools", offering courses at the level of both secondary vocational and secondary technical education. In addition, a limited number of economic and technical *lycea* have been established. These are positioned between *gymnasia* and secondary technical schools; they aim at providing practically oriented education with a higher level of general theory than that is given in technical schools. Graduates from such *lycea* are expected to continue their studies at university, especially in the technical streams. Diversification has been further increased by distinguishing two, three, four and five-year

courses in both secondary technical schools and secondary vocational schools, the length of the courses depending upon the requirements relative to specific occupations. As a result of extending basic schooling for one year, five-year courses in both types of school are to be abolished as of 1996. Only four-year courses leading to a *Maturita* certificate will be available.

Development of higher professional schools

Vertical mobility for students has been increased, firstly by the provision of follow-up courses for both secondary technical and secondary vocational graduates, and secondly, on an experimental basis, by the creation of "higher professional schools". As a result, secondary education has been diversified, and chances of access to a more diversified system of higher education have considerably widened. The creation of "higher professional schools" was recommended by the OECD *Review of Higher Education in the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic* as one of the building blocks of a new non-university type of higher education.

Higher professional schools are developing rapidly. Approximately 300 secondary technical schools have applied for status as higher professional schools and 165 of them have been accepted (by the ministry). Courses in computer science, foreign languages and commercial law are in high demand. Admission is selective. Applicants must have acquired a *Maturita* and passed an entrance examination. The duration of study extends from at least two, to three (or even three and a half) years, including practical training of at least three months.

The status of higher professional schools is said to be problematic as they are not considered to be higher education institutions. Still, their present position at the apex of secondary technical-vocational education enables them to play a crucial catalytic role in the renovation of VOTEC as a whole.

Overall, it appears that government policy-making has paid much attention to changing structures in VOTEC, as part of changing the internal structure of the education system as a whole. However, although important steps have been taken to increase the internal flexibility of VOTEC both horizontally and vertically, two aspects require further attention.

Firstly, there is an apparent gap between "exit" standards, as indicated by examinations administered at graduation, and "entry" standards, as indicated by entrance examinations.

A characteristic common to education institutions in the Czech Republic is that they hold entrance and final examinations. The entrance examination functions as a selection mechanism, but also serves as a means to assess the level of knowledge acquired in schooling. Apparently, schools mistrust final exam results provided by other schools. As a result of wider opportunities for secondary schooling and increased competition among all schools for students, entrance examinations for VOTEC are gradually losing importance as a means of selection and, in the absence of generally accepted standards, the quality of education in similar types of vocational schools differs considerably. Another effect may be that vocational secondary schools – those with the lowest social status –

gradually may find themselves relegated to a "last-choice" option catering for the weakest students, instead of remaining a distinct type of vocational education with a recognised value of its own.

Secondly, school-leaving certificates have an uncertain value on the labour market. With the loss of direct control over the training of their future work force, as a result of the separation of schools from enterprises, individual enterprises either have to "trust" what the schools produce or develop their own criteria for recruitment, in-firm training and payment structures. Obviously, enterprises suffer internally from similar forms of ambiguity due to the development of new types of occupations, the changed profile of existing occupations, and differences in supply and demand. It has to be stressed, however, that changes in the internal structure of VOTEC which lead to a re-arrangement of old qualifications and the establishment of new qualifications, are resulting in a new qualification structure from which enterprises will recruit. Will enterprises develop new posts for graduates of higher professional schools, for example, or will they recruit them in place of graduates of secondary technical schools for existing posts? Will there be an inflation of diplomas or a downgrading of qualifications?

Summary and suggestions

The changes introduced in the structure of vocational and technical education have been positive in that, on the whole, VOTEC has been able to respond rapidly to newly emerging needs on the labour market and also to educational aspirations of young people. In contrast to several other CEECs, the structural changes in secondary technical and vocational education have over-shadowed those in secondary general education. This reflects the strong vocational tradition in Czech education.

The Czech government has left the initiative for structural change largely up to individual schools. In contrast to other CEECs also, apparently the changes at the grass-roots level have led to a considerable expansion of VOTEC, both at the secondary and post-secondary levels. The number of schools has increased, the number of students per class has decreased, and teachers have hardly suffered from unemployment, although they remain lowly paid. Another result has been that larger numbers of young people have been kept within the education system, keeping graduate unemployment low. More relevant, and in further contrast to other CEECs, the Czech government was able to finance this expansion. According to many observers, this was made possible by limiting public funding of higher education (see Chapter 1).

The first issue in this matter is finding the means to consolidate provision and improve quality. While the future financial sustainability of VOTEC would require a separate analysis, there has been too much reliance on a bottom-up, school-based, market-oriented approach, important as it may have been in the initial stages of transition, and too little national policy-making and guidance. The bottom-up approach is now manifesting a series of negative effects: competition among schools instead of co-operation; increasingly obscure educational packages; the unequal prestige of the various types of schools; saturation of education in some sectors and regions and shortages in others.

Also, in view of expected demographic developments, the time may have come to consolidate and rationalise the provision of secondary technical and vocational education and to pay more systematic attention to qualitative aspects of the VOTEC system. Such a re-orientation in policy and practice may create an atmosphere which will be quite different to the one that has prevailed so far. Whereas in the past some schools may have suffered because they could not expand as much as they wished, many schools may suffer in the near future as a result of needed rationalisation of the provision of VOTEC. Consequently, such a change in direction would need careful preparation and consultation.

The review team believes that the ministry, in co-operation with the social partners, should take a leading role in encouraging rationalisation and streamlining of existing provision of vocational and technical education. Individual schools should be encouraged to work together, either because they cater to the same types of occupation or because they are located in the same area, in order to overcome institutional barriers and benefit from each other's experiences. The objective would be to increase the innovative potential of the overall VOTEC system, rather than that of individual schools. Appropriate support institutions, staffed by experienced and motivated members of the teaching force, should be created to support this initiative.

This initiative is likely to meet with many difficulties if it is carried out centrally. On the other hand, schools alone cannot rationalise provision. In the opinion of the reviewers, this is a task that would be carried out most effectively at an intermediate or regional level of school administration in co-operation with employers and municipalities.

The second issue is how to achieve greater transparency regarding the status of schools and qualifications. The reviewers suggest further clarification of the status of various types of VOTEC schools and the qualifications they deliver, with the aim of providing students, parents and enterprises with a clear understanding of programmes and their outcomes. This would imply a strategy with respect to the role of different types of VOTEC within the overall education system, a clear policy on exit and transition standards, and established procedures for facilitating the recognition of qualifications on the labour market. Clearly, such questions cannot be addressed by the Ministry of Education alone; they must be based on wider consultation. This has not been an easy task in any OECD country, but all have had to confront it.

Modernising curricula

Experience in OECD countries and CEEC's has shown that curriculum change is the most strategic area for the modernisation and reform of education. A "bottom-up" approach through pilot schools has been shown to provide one of the best opportunities for the transfer of knowledge and for organised learning among schools to take place, provided that wider dissemination of outcomes can be secured and a link with strategic policy-making can be established. The modernisation of curricula within pilot schools offers opportunities to develop new relationships between different levels of provision and governance within the education system. It also allows, especially at the local and

regional levels, the development of new relationships between schools and enterprises. In this regard, it should be noted that labour market institutions (*i.e.* labour offices) and enterprises, as well as education institutions, must learn to cope with new situations.

Both of the externally-financed VOTEC reform initiatives (EU PHARE and World Bank) opted for the pilot-school curriculum-change approach, with good effects on the modernisation of participating VOTEC institutions. However, while a comprehensive evaluation of the results of these assistance programmes still has to be undertaken, experiences so far show that it has proved difficult to integrate these pilot-school programmes within wider educational reform strategies and overall economic development policies. As is apparently the case in other CEECs as well, it has not been possible to establish a relationship between the modernisation of an isolated aspect of the VOTEC system, such as curricula, and changes in the systemic "logic" of VOTEC – let alone structural change of the education system as a whole.

One frequently advanced explanation for this situation is a decision-making structure which is either too centralised or insufficiently steered at a system level. However, one other reason for the difficulties encountered may well be that key VOTEC actors remain isolated from strategic educational and economic policy-making. In other words, educational policy-makers do not make proper use of experiences accumulated in such pilot-school projects. This, in turn, may be a consequence of efforts by VOTEC actors in CEECs to preclude widening the access to foreign funds from assistance programmes targeted at VOTEC, and at the same time, the lack of interest in VOTEC on the part of their governments. The strategic value given to VOTEC, and to human resource development in general, appears to be far greater in OECD countries than in CEECs. In reality, the causes behind the lack of systematic dissemination and integration of policies probably lie in a combination of all these factors.

School-based curriculum development

The strategy adopted by the Czech Ministry of Education to implement changes in the provision of vocational education in schools has relied primarily on curriculum innovation by teachers. Schools were granted a certain autonomy in the implementation of curricula (10 per cent of the curriculum could be adapted to local circumstances and 30 per cent of syllabi could be changed); schools were permitted to make proposals for the modernisation of curricula with respect to intended occupational destinations and newly developing sectors.

In view of the requirement to quickly respond to changing education and training needs emerging in society, it may be argued that the ministry really had no choice but to delegate curriculum innovation to the schools. Many schools have made use of this opportunity, and, as a result, many teachers have been involved in actively shaping the education provided in their schools. The effects on mobilising and re-orienting the efforts of teachers and schools are apparent. How far the efforts have led to meaningful innovation is not known.

The examiners were told that more than 800 different curricula resulting from school initiatives have now been recognised by the Ministry of Education (as against some 500

existing before 1989). The sheer number of curricula creates problems, one of which is to reduce transparency. In this connection, curriculum change has become part of the competition between schools to attract students with sometimes limited impact upon actual teaching and learning. For example, mention was made of schools which have "invented" new courses sometimes differing in title only from existing ones, in part because it proves to be far easier to have a new curriculum approved than to have an existing one changed. Also, some of these new courses have been prepared in close collaboration with enterprises, who were seeking to re-establish old enterprise-specific relations with schools. The relevancy of these courses is unclear, because no generally accepted list of occupations exists.

One of the positive aspects of school-based curriculum development is that teachers become involved directly in mastering the educational process. However, for such a decentralised process to have an impact on the overall VOTEC system, it is crucial that experiences are continuously disseminated to all schools and that policy makers monitor, evaluate and make use of such experiences. It appears that these conditions are not fulfilled, with the consequence that no strategic use is being made of the experiences of individual schools. Among the problems meriting further attention are: the limited capacities of schools to undertake curriculum changes; the absence of support structures both to assist schools and to disseminate results from school-based activities; the unclear division of responsibilities between schools and ministry in the area of curricula; the changing scope of curricula (from institution-based to level-oriented); and, generally, the lack of educational standards. The problems, and their possible solutions, are inter-related.

Schools and their teachers have invested much time and energy in curriculum development, relying in different measure (if at all) on external financial and professional support. Some schools receive support from the ministry, others from the PHARE Programme for Reform of Vocational Education, still others seek support through links to particular enterprises. It seems that no systematic effort has been undertaken to collect experiences and make them available on a wider scale. Individual schools take initiatives, present these to the ministry for approval, but no "horizontal" dissemination takes place. The exception is perhaps with regard to the experiences resulting from initiatives undertaken in the PHARE Programme, in which schools have access to professional support and dissemination has been foreseen. But here, also, the participating schools tend to regard their newly-developed curricula as proprietary, to be used for competitive advantage in student recruitment. The reviewers were told that no effort has been undertaken to analyse the contents of the more than 800 different curricula presented to the ministry for approval, and furthermore that there is no capacity to do so.

The situation is made worse because present curriculum activities appear to be of a "one-off" kind, developed to solve the most immediate problems of a school. There is no concept for, or attempt to develop, a machinery for continuous curriculum development. Rather, the institutional framework for curriculum development as it used to function before 1989 still exists. There are expert committees, comprised of representatives from industry, universities, and schools, responsible for curricula for the different branches, with VUOS (Research Institute of Vocational and Technical Education) acting as the Secretariat. The committees seem to function without any official status, and it may be questioned whether they should continue in their present form. However, this depends

largely on the methodology chosen for curriculum development and on the outcomes of the discussions on a national core curriculum versus national educational standards. The review team has received different and sometimes conflicting information – an indication that no consensus has yet been reached.

One fundamental issue at stake is the nature of the autonomy granted by central authorities to the schools. At present, the autonomy for curricula development is still limited. Schools can adapt 10 per cent of existing curricula and 30 per cent of the syllabi to local conditions. As mentioned earlier, if schools want to make more radical changes, it is easier to present a new curriculum for a new occupation even if this has to be approved by the ministry. Although there is still a considerable amount of "input" control over vocational and technical education, it is hard to see how the ministry can effectively exert control over so many curricula. As noted above, there are no "output" controls through either standardised final examinations or national standards.

But, experience from OECD countries suggests that educational standards in vocational education only make sense if they also relate to occupational standards. The latter, however, can only be achieved on the basis of negotiations between the social partners, supported by research on developments in occupational structures. This, in itself, is a time-consuming and ongoing activity for which capacities are not yet developed in the Czech Republic. OECD countries have established different types of infrastructures to deal with these issues: these infrastructures go beyond the traditional curriculum development profile of educational research institutions in the Czech Republic.

One development already mentioned concerns the ongoing discussion on the introduction of a system of levels of qualifications in VOTEC, and the related development of curricula for levels of education rather than for different types of schools. Such an approach has been adopted in several OECD countries, with mixed or at least unknown results. Work in the European Union to establish comparability of qualifications has also demonstrated that it is extremely complicated to force national occupational definitions into a single international system. Even with similar titles, the definitions tend to cover a different range of work activities and responsibilities in individual countries.

Definitions of occupations also directly depend on the form of work organisation in a country's industries and enterprises. Traditional forms of work organisation which gave rise to the distinction between workers, technicians and managers, for example, are now being replaced by other forms of work organisation with fewer levels of hierarchy and more integration of activities drawn from different occupational categories. Little is known about actual developments in work organisation in Czech industries and enterprises. Given the unknown and rapid changes now underway, there is limited information on which to judge the relevance of existing occupational definitions and, as a result, the appropriateness of any identified levels of vocational and technical curricula.

Summary and some suggestions

The examiners have the impression that in the Czech Republic the accent at present is on modernising actual curriculum contents (and related teaching materials) in individual schools, rather than on developing methods and institutions for curriculum change as

a continuing process with the aim of improving VOTEC as a whole. In view of the need to respond to changing labour market requirements, perhaps the first phase of the transition period was a time when no other choice was possible. In any case, important benefits have been realised: schools and teachers have acquired important and useful experience over the last few years; the value of this engagement at school level in the educational process cannot be underestimated.

However, gradually, the limitations of a school-based approach to modernising the curriculum are becoming apparent, especially in view of the lack of capacity to monitor and disseminate school-based experiences. To avoid a situation where the ministry is overwhelmed by a large number of school-based curricula submitted for approval, a better approach is to shift from "input" control to "output" control. The latter, however, requires consensus on the list of qualifications and standards, educational as well as occupational.

A matter for concern is that insufficient effort is devoted to use curriculum development as a means to modernise VOTEC as a whole. At present, the curriculum is used too much as an instrument in the competition between schools. The competition is unequal, since some schools have access to additional resources and others do not. The stress on curricula has also diverted attention from teaching methods. While curricula can define the types of knowledge, the organisation of the teaching and learning process more directly affects the acquisition of skills and attitudes (*i.e.* how knowledge is applied in practice). This is one of the reasons why there is growing interest in OECD countries in developing and extending more widely new forms of integrated learning.

A machinery for continuous curriculum change must be developed. The ministry should take the lead in bringing about a new means for curriculum development, in which continuous change and improvement of curricula are fostered within a national framework of agreed standards. Such a framework would set down clear responsibilities at central and local levels and put in place sufficient support structures to assist both schools and actors at the different levels and to promote the sharing of experiences of individual schools. The reviewers believe that the actions needed will require a stronger representation for VOTEC in the ministry.

Social partners should be involved more systematically, starting at the local level and with growth sectors. The review team was struck by the lack of involvement of employer representatives in curriculum design at the national level. Employer associations and chambers appeared to be unaware of the issue, and in any event, seem not prepared to participate in this time-consuming task. Unions are also absent. In view of the lack of capacity of both employers organisations and trade unions to take part at the national level, one approach would be to build upon contacts which individual schools have developed with social partners at the local level or in particular growth sectors of the economy. Local or sector-based projects could be used to gain experience and develop capacities for more continuous involvement on the part of the social partners.

The objective would be to establish an infrastructure bringing together educational decision makers with representatives from industry and trade unions to work out and adopt occupational and educational standards. Such an infrastructure, in different forms and orientations, can be found in most OECD countries. It is expected that an appropriate

infrastructure would facilitate the elaboration of national frameworks for local curriculum development and guarantee that the "content" of certificates and qualifications produced by the VOTEC system are recognised by industry, thus avoiding costly duplication of training by enterprises. To the extent such an infrastructure helps to promote a consensus between VOTEC and the employment system on these matters, the effectiveness, relevance and efficiency of VOTEC will be increased.

Improving the governance of VOTEC

A combination of circumstances reveals weaknesses in the governance of VOTEC in the Czech Republic. Attention has already been drawn to the inability of the ministry to take initiative in the curriculum area. The relationships with other ministries, *i.e.* the Ministry of Labour for school-leaver training and the Ministry of Economy, responsible for vocational schools, are unsettled and, in any case, not close enough to allow a rationalisation of provision – if not responsibilities – to take place. For their part, the social partners play a small role in curriculum development and are not prepared to be involved actively in the delivery, let alone the financing, of VOTEC. Support structures, like VUOS (Research Institute of Vocational and Technical Education), are too research-oriented and, in any event, lack the authority to implement the changes implied by their research. Finally, individual VOTEC schools operating independently does not lead to the development of a cohesive policy at the national level. Among other weaknesses, in the absence of external support and a wider overall policy framework, individual schools and teachers cannot arrive at new relationships with the employment system.

There is a need for a stronger strategic role for government. If VOTEC is to do more than to react passively to short-term changes on the labour market, policies for reform cannot rely only on bottom-up initiatives. Monitoring and guidance within a clear policy framework are required. The consequences of a lack of a strategic national approach may already be emerging: waste of resources, competition between education institutions, isolated activities, unbalanced provision and extreme inequalities. Above all, however, VOTEC will be unable to play a role in overall strategies for modernising and restructuring the economy and employment.

Policy-making at the national level should remain of a strategic nature, leaving details on implementation to lower levels. In this connection, the reviewers believe that the following functions are best handled at the national level: rationalisation of provision, quality control via standard-setting, recognition of qualifications aimed at transparency and comparability with qualifications in other VOTEC systems, and accountability.

Other problems best handled at the national level, rather than at the regional and local levels, include those of special target groups with vulnerable positions on the labour market and guarantees against discrimination based on sex, race, or handicaps. The availability, quality and distribution of information is also a responsibility best dealt with centrally. Actors at lower levels, as well as at the central level, lack basic information and analysis. Wide gaps with respect to information on policy-related questions on the borderline of VOTEC and the employment system were noted. Systems need to be

developed to provide information for decision-making at all levels, and by young people, parents and enterprises.

Also recommended is a shift toward a strategy aimed at developing regional VOTEC employment "networks", in which co-operation between different actors with responsibilities for education and employment (*e.g.* schools and other training institutions, labour market offices, chambers, municipalities, enterprises) is promoted and used. The intermediate or regional level should be the locus for co-ordination of all "stakeholders" in the VOTEC system. This is the level where workable solutions can be found to the problems posed by the present division of responsibilities for VOTEC institutions among various ministries, each with their own specific administrative rules, and by weak co-ordination with the social partners.

Integration of VOTEC sub-systems: initial education, retraining and further training

Initial vocational and technical education for youth were the main concern of this report thus far. There are two other areas relevant for VOTEC, namely retraining the unemployed and further training for adults. Institutional capacities for the former are being developed as part of the labour market infrastructure. Spending on retraining remains relatively low, due to relatively low unemployment. However, labour offices already provide labour market retraining to "correct" the problem faced by VOTEC graduates who have been trained in fields for which there is no demand on the labour market. With regard to the further training of adults, the previous state-financed system has collapsed. Provision is now largely handled by commercial training providers. Under the PHARE Labour Market Restructuring Programme, a separate analysis has been undertaken of the problems faced by adult education.

One lesson to be learned from experiences in OECD countries is that there are benefits to be realised from better coherence between the three "sub-systems" of vocational education and training, *i.e.* those for youth, adults, and the unemployed. In many countries, these sub-systems developed quite independently from each other. At a time of growth in unemployment, decreasing financial means and increasing importance of continuous learning, policy makers in these countries have found that the "sub-systems", operating separately and without coherence, failed to provide sufficient and appropriate response.

One development now observed in some OECD countries is an increasing feedback from adult and labour market training on initial education for youth. In particular, the area of adult education and training appears to be better suited for experimentation and institutional change. In the light of this experience, the approach to VOTEC reform and modernisation in the Czech Republic might build upon the experiences with initiatives in adult and labour-market education. Change could be introduced "backwards" through the system.

At present, the pattern in the Czech Republic seems to reflect a continuation of the development of separate sub-systems. Even if at local levels the actors do sometimes co-operate, initial education remains the domain of schools and school authorities, retraining is becoming the domain of the market, and provision of further education seems likely to

be handled largely by enterprises. In view of the changing role of initial vocational education for working careers, problems of exclusion for those who failed to receive proper initial education are likely to increase. Furthermore, with the expected development towards recurrent education (and alternating learning and working), problems with respect to recognition of certificates and quality control will also grow. Co-ordinated action at the national level is needed to achieve integration of the whole VOTEC system. Such co-ordinated action will require clarification of the roles of different ministries and the establishment of means to further co-operation and communication among the ministries concerned and with different actors in the economy and society.

Chapter 8

RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents eleven recommendations which the review team considers to be of particular importance for the future development of the Czech education system. Most of them relate directly to the key issues mentioned in Chapter 7 of the *Background Report*, and some provide answers, in part, to the list of "Questions to the examiners" presented there. The recommendations complement those developed for the higher education sector contained in the OECD *Review of Higher Education in the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic*. This chapter begins with a statement of the key principles which undergird the set of recommendations.

Principles

The principles which support and cut across the recommendations are: quality; equity; effectiveness in the use of resources; relevance; and democratic and efficient management. These principles, and the recommendations which have been developed to strengthen their position in Czech education, derive from approaches to education in the OECD area as they have evolved over the last thirty years.

Quality

Quality in education has not always been a primary concern of OECD countries. In the 1960s and early 1970s, the policy priority was to accommodate the rapid expansion of enrolment. This period has been referred to as the "golden age" of quantitative growth. The effectiveness of policies was judged on such indicators of performance as enrolment ratios, drop-out rates and requirements for scientific and technical personnel. The need for innovation and change in structures, curricula, management and other areas began to be felt strongly only towards the middle of the 1970s. Many of the initiatives taken since then have reflected a new concern for the effectiveness of the learning process.

In the 1990s, the quest for quality and, as a corollary, the need for quality measurement and control lie at the heart of all socio-economic systems in OECD countries. The education system is no exception. For education, however, quality – its measurement and

control – is a complex issue because the viewpoints of users (*e.g.* employers), suppliers (schools and other training institutions) and consumers (students and their families) have to be reconciled in order for them to arrive at a common understanding. At the same time, the various facets of quality (attitudinal, cognitive and behavioural) in teaching and learning outcomes are not easily amenable to measurement.

Despite these limitations, the quality of the education process ought to be assessed at key points of the system, both to provide the various actors with adequate information for decision-making and to give policy-makers a basis on which to engage public dialogue over reforms.

Some OECD countries have more experience than others in the assessment of education quality. The modes of assessment differ, ranging from traditional methods of controlling inputs (*e.g.* teacher training and inspection, number of contact hours with students, detailed syllabi, etc.) to the use of examination systems or achievement tests at various stages or levels. Most countries use a mix of these methods, the trend being towards the measurement of outputs (what pupils have actually learned) rather than of inputs.

In the Czech Republic, many of the policy initiatives taken since 1989 have been oriented towards the decentralisation, deregulation and privatisation of schools. But strengthening the involvement of all actors in decision-making and introducing competition among schools are not sufficient to upgrade system-wide quality. Moreover, in such a policy context, the task of assessing and monitoring quality has become both pressing and problematic. There are indications that the lack of quality measurement is leading to a significant waste of time and energy for pupils and teachers (assessments must be made at each entry or exit point of the education system). Quality assessment needs to be seen as a tool to monitor and steer a democratic education system.

Equity

A concern for equity in education is found in all OECD countries, where over the past three decades many reforms aimed at promoting equality of educational opportunity have been implemented. The political will required to launch and support such reforms has been uneven over time and across countries, depending on the value attached by society to equity. The concept itself has shifted over time, away from egalitarian and society-wide connotations to a "softer" version giving more consideration to responses to individual differences.

The attitude of Czech society towards equity is ambivalent. To many, the term is highly tainted by the bureaucratically-imposed uniformity which characterised so-called "equity" policies during the post-war period until 1989. Memories of that time when the powers of the state paid little consideration to citizens' rights, are vivid in all strata of society. Anything which encroaches upon individual rights recalls the distortions of that period and is strongly rejected.

Equity is also believed by some to be in conflict with a notion of intellectual ability, according to which only a small segment of a given cohort (some say around 15 per cent) are seen to be capable of pursuing high level, high quality studies. According to this

traditional, if mistaken, view, equity policies leading to increases in student numbers inevitably imply a fall in quality. In OECD countries, this narrow notion of ability was abandoned as early as the mid-1960s, when it became clear that it was overly simplistic and scientifically unjustifiable.

A broader view of ability, and therefore of equity, is now advocated by the Ministry: "Education represents a significant integrating force which, through passing on and developing shared values, maintains its continuity and internal cohesion. It is an important dimension of the quality of life, it is a prerequisite of the continuation of democratic development and it underpins political and social stability" (*Quality and Accountability*, 1994). This view will require continuing and innovative policy support as, at present, Czech society is more open to initiatives which enhance individual rights than to measures which might curtail them in the name of equity.

Effective use of resources

Until 1975, rapid growth in education budgets was a common feature of development in most OECD countries. Economic growth became less certain after the first oil crisis, and budgets for education levelled off as the sector competed with other sectors for scarce public resources. In recent years, education budgets have been under severe constraint; this has triggered new initiatives to improve efficiency and to diversify sources of finance.

By OECD standards, education in the Czech Republic fares rather well in terms of public expenditure devoted to education as a proportion of GDP (approximately 6 per cent in 1994). Private expenditure for education increases this ratio. The problem is that GDP per capita is low, in comparison to other OECD countries. The economy has slowly recovered from the sharp fall experienced at the beginning of the transition period. Expenditure patterns also reveal relative under-spending on higher education, and new, hard-to-control and poorly-targeted growth of public spending in certain parts of basic and secondary education.

While awaiting full economic recovery and the larger economic base and higher tax revenues associated with such a recovery, there is considerable scope for improving the present allocation of resources in education. The significant decline in the size of school-age cohorts will free scarce resources for other uses. Moreover, a more efficient deployment of the teaching force and the implementation of cost-recovery policies for services other than education which make use of school premises would also ease pressures on the existing budget.

On the other hand, there is no lack of opportunities for additional spending on education, and the reviewers have identified areas where increased funding could be highly effective: to improve the pay of teachers; to establish incentives in support of high-quality teaching; to strengthen effective support systems (inspection, evaluation, research, etc.). To the extent that the set of recommendations have budgetary implications, the reviewers' guiding principle has been to identify ways to *better* allocate available resources in order to improve effectiveness.

Relevance

Relevance has always been a cornerstone of education policy development in OECD countries. Here, also, the concept has evolved over time. In the 1960s, education systems were seen essentially as suppliers of highly-qualified manpower for the economy. Later in the 1970s, the social dimension was incorporated into the concept of relevance, through reference to equal opportunities and democratisation. To these two macro-dimensions, economic and social, was then added the need to respond to the characteristics of the individual learner. This latter approach, more internal to the education system, was seen as particularly important in the case of general education.

In the 1990s, the labour market difficulties encountered throughout the OECD area have led to a renewed emphasis on strengthening the links between education and employment. Attention has been focused, as in the OECD *Jobs Study*, on specific policies and programmes aimed at groups found to have particular difficulties on the labour market.

In the Czech Republic, as in other economies in transition, a key item on the policy agenda is the establishment of new, close relationships between education and the emerging employment system. The transition to an advanced market economy calls for the design and implementation of a supportive and responsive human resource policy, one which enables and promotes response to the specific needs of an economy and society undergoing a process of fast modernisation and structural changes.

This is an important issue, because education has not yet been identified in government circles as an investment yielding returns to the society as well as individuals. Rather, education is seen more as a social good imposing a drain on public expenditure. This view weakens the case for education in the competition for scarce public funds.

Chapter 1 sketched the main contours of a human resource development strategy for the Czech Republic and highlighted the implications of such a strategy for education and VOTEC. School policy being the main focus of this review, implications for vocational and technical education at the secondary level have been emphasised. However, the reviewers have also drawn attention to the issue of relevance as it applies to VOTEC at the post-secondary level and to continuing education. There are implications for higher education as well, and these have been addressed separately in the *Review of Higher Education in the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic*.

Democratic and efficient management

The principle of democratic management in education has both vertical and horizontal dimensions. The vertical dimension entails seeking the right balance between the various layers of education governance – central, intermediate (or regional), community, and the schools themselves. While the approaches to striking the balance differ according to the political, social and administrative traditions and circumstances of individual countries, the principle of "subsidiarity" – according to which all the decisions which can be taken at a particular level need not be taken up to the higher level – can be a good guide in allocating competencies and responsibilities among government layers.

The horizontal dimension of democratic management entails the participation in the decision-making process of actors from the civil society. Parents, municipalities, employers, unions, non-profit associations and other bodies should be consulted on all decisions which have a societal impact. Engaging these actors as "partners" in education not only reinforces democratic tendencies; it also can be very effective in terms of mobilising resources for education through political means at all levels, as well as from non-government sources.

The current attitude of the Czech society towards democratic management reflects past history. After more than four decades of centralised and bureaucratic management of its education system, Czech society is eager to initiate and implement reforms according to democratic principles. Schools, teachers and other interested, concerned actors, are invited to take part in decision-making and in developing and implementing needed reforms. The state's role is restricted to defining broad, long-term directions, identifying key principles and providing financial resources.

Most of the reforms initiated since 1989 reflect this changed pattern of governance. The depoliticisation of education, the breaking-up of the state monopoly and the decentralisation in management are featured elements in the legislative steps taken thus far. These steps have led, for example, to enhanced school autonomy, incentives to develop private education and decentralised mechanisms to develop new curricula.

The rejection and replacement of prior arrangements for decentralised decision-making have been quite drastic. Nonetheless, the matter is still unsettled for at least three reasons. Firstly, this is an area where the gap between rhetoric and reality is quite large, leaving ample room for interpretation and controversy. Secondly, the tradition of "centralism" in education in the Czech Republic has deeper roots, dating back to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. There may be tendencies for central direction to re-emerge, in a different form. Thirdly, the transition thus far, while relying largely on private and local initiative, has yielded little in the form of the modern management tools now seen in most OECD countries as crucial for the functioning of a decentralised system: inspectorate, evaluation, data collection, research, quality assessment. In short, the support systems are not yet up to the standards sought in the OECD area.

This explains why the new role of the Ministry of Education, although carefully defined in official documents, is still unclear in practice. The delineation of what the ministry should or should not do is still a matter of political debate, except in the area of preparing and enforcing laws and legislative amendments. The absence of an intermediate layer of government is, in the opinion of the reviewers, another obstacle to stability in the system, and they offer a specific recommendation on this matter below. At the school level, while democratic management exists in theory, there appears to be little effective participation from the full range of key actors.

Education management should be efficient as well as democratic. How is the overall steering of a highly decentralised system to be achieved? In a context of autonomous schools, how are learning processes to be monitored? How is policy leadership exercised and resources allocated when spending decisions are devolved to a multiplicity of actors? How is excess or insufficient provision to be handled? These are some of the problems arising in the management of the Czech education system, and all are part of the larger

issue of reconciling the "bottom-up" and "top-down" approaches to the governance of education. The solution to the problems lies in designing effective support and monitoring systems and making sure that all actors understand them and are encouraged to make use of them. OECD countries have introduced a number of different approaches in this area; their experiences constitute concrete examples.

Recommendations

Eleven recommendations are made herein as priorities for action. These recommendations cover three broad fields:

- **Improving the curriculum, structure and quality of basic and general secondary education.**
  1. Developing instruments to assess pupils' learning achievements in basic schools.
  2. Promoting multi-profile schools at the upper basic and lower secondary levels of education.
  3. Increasing student flows in secondary general education (*gymnasium*).
  4. Standardising and differentiating the secondary school-leaving examination (*Maturita*).
  5. Establishing a National Curriculum Council.
- **Strengthening the relevance, responsiveness and quality of administration of vocational and technical education.**
  6. Establishing a National Agency for VOTEC curriculum, standards and certification.
  7. Creating a tax incentive for companies investing in VOTEC.
- **Implementing more effective means of administration, governance and management (including teachers – their responsibilities, conditions of work and preparation).**
  8. Establishing an intermediate (regional) level of school administration.
  9. Strengthening monitoring and evaluation: the Inspectorate.
  10. Linking in-service teacher training to school development and strengthened careers in teaching.
  11. Establishing School Councils to strengthen school-community relationships.

The analyses and rationales for these recommendations have been presented in preceding chapters. In most cases, the recommendations and their implications apply to several policy fields discussed individually in the chapters. For ease of reference, the chapter in which the principal argument for each recommendation was developed is given below. Only brief supportive statements, drawn from the text of the relevant chapters, are provided.

The recommendations were presented to, and discussed by the Czech Minister of Education, senior officials in the Ministry of Education and officials and representatives from other ministries, agencies and groups at a special meeting of the OECD Education Committee, convened in Prague, 14-15 March 1996. The debate was frank, substantive

and wide-ranging. Along with members of the Czech delegation, delegates of other OECD Member countries and other participants drew upon experience in their countries in discussing the appropriateness and feasibility of the recommendations. While expressing agreement on the rationales and broad directions for the set of recommendations, the Minister of Education and senior ministry officials noted where Czech policy in the near term would differ in detail from what has been proposed by the team of examiners. The main points raised in the course of the review meeting are provided under the discussion of each recommendation.

Recommendation No. 1: Developing instruments to assess pupil learning achievement in basic schools (Chapter 4)

At a time when basic schools in the Czech Republic are undergoing important changes (introduction of the ninth year, competition from extended *gymnasia* for good pupils, curricular innovation), there is no appropriate instrument or set of instruments to assess and control the quality of education provided. The traditional ways of controlling inputs (*e.g.* initial training of teachers, formula funding based only on the number of pupils, periodic inspection, etc.) can no longer substitute for the assessment of the outcomes of the teaching and learning process.

It is generally believed that the quality of basic schools differs widely. Because each secondary school, whether general, technical or vocational, is free to set its own admission criteria, every basic school leaver has to sit a number of entrance examinations in order to increase the chances for admission further on in the education system. This situation places an undue burden on pupils and, furthermore, constitutes a waste of time and resources.

It is therefore recommended to develop instruments to measure pupil achievement throughout basic school and to undertake a mandatory assessment of attainment at the end of ninth year. The assessment could take the form of a final examination in which an important place is given to an external measurement of attainment. The external part of the examination would be proposed to schools, but not imposed. However, its use by schools in parallel to their own school-based assessments, should be strongly encouraged in order to guarantee comparability of results among schools and to provide the basis for the use of these results in admission procedures to secondary schools. The task of developing achievement tests and examination materials should be entrusted to a new agency for educational assessment, staffed by representatives of the teaching profession, the Inspectorate, the research community and other representatives of the civil society, as appropriate.

The publication of the assessment results, aggregated for each school but on a school-by-school basis, would help establish "quality maps" of the school system and encourage school directors, teachers and local School Offices, with appropriate support, to take action to upgrade those basic schools demonstrating relatively low achievements. Such information would also support parents in demands for remedial action where needed and, in particular, for the simplification of procedures for access to secondary

schools. In short, external assessments would contribute to an increased visibility and transparency of basic education for all interested parties.

It is not within the examiners' remit to enter into the technicalities of developing and reporting achievement tests at the level of basic education. At the least, assessments of pupil learning achievement should take into account differentiated curriculum at the upper basic school level (see Recommendation No. 2), and teachers' views should be taken into account in the development and administration of the tests. External assessment results at school-level should be reported with other school and community data to permit more detailed comparisons.

The Czech Ministry officials welcomed this recommendation. They observed, however, that national assessments at different stages and levels represent a departure for an education service, the tradition and experience of which has been on monitoring inputs, not results or achievements. From the ministry's point of view, any initiative in this area will need to encourage the involvement of all the actors of the education process in measures to improve learning and raise pupil achievement. For this reason, assessments or other approaches to monitoring should also be developed and managed by the ministry in partnership with all those concerned. The reviewers recognise that perspectives and experience on this matter differ among OECD countries; some of those differences emerged in the course of the exchange.

Recommendation No. 2: Promoting multi-profile schools at the upper basic and lower secondary levels of education (Chapter 2)

Over the past five years, an extended, six- or eight-year *gymnasium* has emerged which, at the lower secondary level, runs parallel to the basic school. This new structure, called the multi-year *gymnasium*, is to a large extent a return to the pre-1948 period. For several reasons, the review team believes that this return to past, elitist traditions is likely to have far-reaching negative effects on equity, on the quality of education, and on the effectiveness of the system as a whole.

Firstly, the multi-year *gymnasium* is competing with the upper basic school for bright pupils, thus introducing early streaming. Given the tendency for bright teachers to follow bright children, there is a risk of creating a "second rate" status for the basic school and, eventually, its transformation into a sort of *Hauptschule* preparing pupils exclusively for access to technical and vocational schools.

Also, the underlying educational philosophy of the multi-year *gymnasium* contradicts the recent decision to extend the length of basic school from eight to nine years to match the duration of compulsory schooling. The extended basic school, when viewed against the multi-year *gymnasium*, will be even less attractive to bright pupils who will be induced to leave early.

The value and prestige of the present four-year *gymnasium* derive from its position as the main preparatory route to university. It will be difficult to maintain its quality in the future. The multi-year *gymnasium* will become the privileged access route to university, and so undermine the position of the four-year *gymnasium* and place at risk the quality of its programmes, teaching and learning.

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Furthermore, a positive feature of secondary education provision in the Czech Republic is the similarity of treatment and structure among types of schools. All secondary general and technical schools offer a four-year cycle leading to the *Maturita*. The multi-year *gymnasium* creates a new imbalance in treatment and structure.

Finally, in a context characterised by the scarcity of public funds, serious questions can be raised about an initiative which leads to a concentration of public funds in those schools increasingly selecting pupils from the social and economic "élite".

These reasons prompt the review team to express their concerns about even further increases in the number of multi-year *gymnasium*. Appropriate education provision for gifted children could be reached more effectively by differentiating the curriculum at the upper level of the basic school, thus enabling fast learners to develop according to their full potential while introducing positive discrimination measures for low-achievers.

To mitigate the negative effects of the multi-year *gymnasium, it is recommended to develop multi-profile schools at the upper cycle of the basic school and the lower cycle of the multi-year* gymnasium *and to facilitate transfers of pupils and teachers between them.* These multi-profile schools eventually might provide a basis for the development of a comprehensive, but still differentiated, cycle for the 11 to 15-year-old age group.

In order to ensure equal treatment and a high standard, curriculum standards for the multi-profile schools, the level and quality of teacher training required for their staff, and the amount of government subsidy (normatives) should be the same as for other schools enrolling 11 to 15 year-old children.

Czech Ministry officials expressed the view that, in the near term, multi-profile gymnasia *will not be promoted to replace multi-level* gymnasia. *The latter presently offer advantages which other schools are as yet unable to provide. The schools are highly responsive to student interests, which has had the effect of promoting equity by keeping more gifted students within state schools as opposed to the private sector.* Delegates from Denmark, Switzerland and the United Kingdom spoke to a larger issue addressed in the examiners' recommendation: how to reduce the rigidity of separate streams so as to promote greater opportunity and equity for all young people. In those countries, steps have been taken to establish for all streams a range of routes and pathways and (or) recognised, validated qualifications, with the expectation of meeting, among others, some of the objectives identified in this recommendation for the Czech Republic.

Recommendation No. 3: Increasing student flows into secondary general education* (gymnasium) *(Chapter 1)

In 1995-96, only 16 per cent of all pupils reaching upper secondary education (ISCED 3) were enrolled in the *gymnasium*. This is a very low share, in comparison with the situation in other OECD countries. Aside from the competition for students on the part of good quality secondary technical schools with a clear employment orientation, two factors account for this unique situation. Firstly, there is the traditional belief – widespread among teachers, ministry officials and the public at large – that the *gymnasium* should be restricted to a narrow "élite" in order to maintain quality. This

belief is related to the mistaken notion that intellectual abilities are limited to a small proportion of the age group.

Secondly, access to higher education remains limited and highly selective. In a country where one *Maturita*-holder out of two cannot gain access to university, the *gymnasium* route is risky. A safer route is to enrol in a good secondary technical school with a programme leading to a technical diploma recognised on the labour market and also permitting access to higher education.

The review team believes that this pattern of enrolment is not viable in the long run. From a social perspective, it is undemocratic because it departs from the principle which recognises the right of pupils (or their parents) to choose among educational options and paths, according to their abilities and interests. From an economic perspective, it undermines a key element of the human resources strategy for the post-transition period which calls for higher levels of general education in the work force. A movement towards such a profile would bring the Czech Republic more in line with the situation in other OECD countries, where larger (if not increasing) proportions of the 15 to 18-year-old age group are enrolled in general secondary education.

It is, therefore, recommended to increase the provision of education in gymnasia *and to differentiate the curriculum among broad streams capable of accommodating students with diverse abilities and interests.* Each stream would lead to its own, specific final examination. A categorisation of streams along the lines of "scientific", "humanities" and "socio-economic" offers one approach; others are possible.

This recommendation could be implemented in connection with the development of multi-profile secondary schools, including the general and technical tracks of upper secondary education, as a means to facilitate the transfer of students among the tracks. The implementation of this recommendation would also serve the aim of enlarging access to higher education and diversifying its structure through the development of non-university higher education, as set out in the OECD *Review of Higher Education in the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic*.

Officials from the Czech Ministry expressed strong agreement with the direction set out in this recommendation, but they argued that changes in the structure of provision (especially the addition of a ninth year to basic schooling) opened up other possibilities for ensuring that all students undertook more general education than is presently the case (regardless of the stream). Attention was drawn to links between general and technical education, more particularly to experimental programmes which are providing a blending of gymnasia *and technical curricula, as a key element of the response.*

Recommendation No. 4: Standardising and differentiating the secondary school-leaving examination* (Maturita) *(Chapter 4)

All Czech pupils who finish secondary education, whether in the general (*gymnasium*) or the technical streams, are expected to sit for the *Maturita* examination. Young people making application for university admission must sit and pass the *Maturita* examination, but also try separate entrance examinations organised by individual facul-

ties. These examinations serve as selection mechanisms, since approximately one *Maturita*-holder out of two gains admission to higher education.

At present, the *Maturita* examination, with its two compulsory and three optional subjects, is organised by individual secondary schools with little oversight or involvement from the Ministry of Education or local authorities. Over 95 per cent of pupils pass the *Maturita*, so it would appear to cover a wide range of achievement. The extent to which student ratings from secondary school are combined, for the purpose of selecting candidates for university entrance, with the results of access examinations organised by faculties is unclear and, in any case, differs among faculties.

The deficiencies of this system are threefold: firstly, *Maturita* results are not comparable among schools. Secondly, they do not permit an assessment of the quality of secondary education across the country or, a comparison with the standards attained in other countries. Thirdly, *Maturita* results are of little use to university faculties in processing applications for admission. One consequence is that students must sit examinations in several faculties in order to increase their chances of admission. The whole process is costly, time-consuming and burdensome for students and the university staff concerned.

The *Maturita* should be reformed. The review team believes that any reform should follow three key principles. Firstly, the new *Maturita* should consist of a combination of school-based assessment of achievement and externally-developed and universally-applied common examination, the latter in order to allow and promote comparability internally and externally. Secondly, the new *Maturita* should involve the state, either at the central or regional level, to a greater extent than is presently the case, so that the *Maturita* examination becomes an effective means of quality control for secondary education. Thirdly, the new *Maturita* should provide useful information about the quality and content of student achievements to university faculties and higher education institutions.

It is recommended, therefore, that the Maturita *be divided into two parts, one defined at the school level and another standardised at the regional or country level, in each of the broad curriculum areas of secondary general and technical education.* University rectors and deans would be invited to make specific recommendations for the organisation of the second part of the *Maturita*, which could, in some cases, substitute for all or part of the access examinations organised by individual faculties. The long-term objective would be for the *Maturita* to provide sufficient information on achievement for decisions to be made on access to higher education. The procedures for the selection of students in fields of study would remain under the control of higher education authorities. The agency for educational assessment, proposed under Recommendation No. 1, could be charged with the responsibility for elaborating a national part of the *Maturita*.

It is expected that the differentiation of the *Maturita* into broad fields will support the process of differentiation of the curriculum during the last years of secondary education, both within the *gymnasium* and within secondary technical schools. The new *Maturita* should enable students to orient their studies according to their abilities and interests and to better prepare for admission into higher education.

The Czech Ministry strongly agreed with the need to reform the Maturita. *The ministry presently is providing support for a wide range of discussions on this matter.* Delegates from other CEECs described similar initiatives in their countries. A reform of the secondary school leaving examination was undertaken in Poland, and it had the consequence of stimulating new thinking about needed changes in curriculum standards at both the basic and secondary levels. There is interest in reform of the *Maturita* in Slovakia as well, but the expectations of parents and other actors of such qualifications is an acknowledged constraint. The review team recognised differences among countries in the ways learning at this level is certified and assessed: as noted in the discussion, authorities in Belgium (Flemish Community) took the decision to abolish the equivalent of the *Maturita* in 1991, because all students who sat for the examination succeeded.

Recommendation No. 5: Establishing a National Curriculum Council (Chapter 3)

Curriculum reform is one of the areas where the shift of power away from the Ministry of Education to the schools has been most pronounced. The ministry sets educational standards, providing both a broad outline of content and a definition of achievement targets. Schools are permitted to devote up to 10 per cent of teaching time to school-developed objectives and to adapt 30 per cent of the syllabus of an individual subject. They can also submit their own curricula to the ministry for approval.

The trend to decentralise curriculum development to the school level is welcome, but questions can be raised about the effectiveness of these arrangements along percentage lines. Although curricular innovations at the school level are believed to be numerous, they are neither recorded nor disseminated widely. Furthermore, many schools continue to follow old syllabi, choosing not to use the scope provided for local innovation and adaptation. Also, existing school-based initiatives are not sufficient to rationalise the provision of distinct curricula to meet student demand in a given catchment area. This problem is more significant outside of Prague, where the limited number of schools and the absence of an intermediate level with the mandate to co-ordinate the supply of schools offering different curricula, especially at the secondary level, precludes such a rationalisation. Moreover, "vertical" democratisation in curriculum development has taken precedence over "horizontal" democratisation, to such an extent that there is limited scope for the engagement and involvement of the civil society at the central level in such processes. There is also evidence that the means to disseminate to schools new standards developed at the level of the ministry are weak.

These considerations have led the review team *to recommend that the educational standards which are now being developed should be rapidly adopted and applied, along with the corresponding programmes. It is further recommended that a National Curriculum Council, representing a wide platform of interested parties inside and outside the education system, be established.* This Council would be entrusted with the task of reviewing and accrediting standards and programmes, advising the Ministry of Education as well as schools on major trends in curriculum development, evaluating best practice and promoting research and development on curricula.

The Council would work in close co-operation with the Educational Research Institute. It would be conceived as a broadly-based advisory and review body giving formal status to the curriculum proposals prepared by the Institute and other curriculum development institutions.

Ministry officials welcomed the direction of broad participation of partners in curriculum development, but expressed concern about the difficulty of introducing national participatory structures, such as the proposed National Curriculum Council, in a period when concerns about the excesses of centralised decision-making remain high, and partners are reluctant for many reasons to take part in such voluntary efforts. It was noted that the Ministry of Education already has responsibility for curriculum contents and standards, so the relationship between the proposed curriculum council and the ministry would need to be worked out. While acknowledging the sensitivity of the issue and the difficulties involved, delegates from several countries spoke to the need for the government to take the lead in promoting the development of system-wide assessment, and encouraging and persuading its various partners to take part in the process. The approach recommended by the review team is broadly similar in structure to those found in several of the countries taking part in the review meeting.

Recommendation No. 6: Establishing a national agency for VOTEC curriculum, standards and certification (Chapter 7)

A key element in the success of education reform is the realisation of a VOTEC system which is responsive to the employment needs of the economy. Curriculum reform figures prominently in this process. In the Czech Republic, the strategy for VOTEC curriculum development has been to rely on a "bottom-up" approach based on curricular innovations by teachers at the school level. This strategy has yielded many interesting experiences and is worth pursuing.

However, a more systemic approach to VOTEC reform is needed in order to increase the effectiveness and transparency of the system. In this regard, the review team makes two recommendations, the implementation of which would strengthen the institutional capacity for on-going reform and innovation in this area.

First, the long-term objective is to develop, at the national level, an effective means for continuous curriculum development in all forms and types of vocational education and training, including initial education for youth, further education and re-training. For this purpose, *it is recommended to establish a National Agency for VOTEC Curriculum, Standards and Certification and appoint a Vice-Minister for VOTEC in the Ministry of Education.*

The first task of this new agency would be to establish a qualifications map of all types and levels of vocational education and training, ranging from the vocational school certificates to the diplomas and certificates awarded by post-secondary, higher professional schools. Together with ministry and school officials, representatives of the social partners should be involved in the process of designing and monitoring new qualifications and setting achievement standards for each of them. Attention to the content and levels of

qualifications and standards would lead to the revision of curricula, educational materials, assessment and certification procedures.

It will be important to distinguish carefully the nature and scope of involvement of various partners with respect to occupational profiles and the associated achievement standards, on the one hand, and the translation of these into educational standards, curricula, teaching programmes, assessment and certification, on the other. It will also be important to structure research and development work to feed into decision-making.

The proposed agency could be developed around a redesigned and possibly enlarged VUOS (Research Institute of Vocational and Technical Education), which would remain responsible for research and development on VOTEC issues, but should become much more integrated within an overall decision-making structure involving ministries, school officials and social partners. There are several possible organisational solutions, and different examples can be found in different countries. It is crucial, however, that the agency (and its research and development body) be independent of a single ministry. The agency would also have to retain sufficient staff to support, monitor and disseminate curricular innovations at the school level and to co-operate with similar institutions in other European countries.

The reviewers are aware of the difficulties of the tasks involved: the social partners have to be convinced of the usefulness of becoming involved in VOTEC matters; there has been an understandable reluctance to develop strong national institutions; there are very difficult technical and methodological problems to be solved in streamlining curriculum development at the national level, especially at a time when employment developments are still uncertain. With respect to the latter, the traditionally high standards of Czech VOTEC and the commitment shown by the numerous school-based curriculum initiatives undertaken over the last few years serve as a strong base for development. Increased international co-operation may help tackle organisational and methodological difficulties.

The traditionally high prestige of VOTEC in the Czech society, as evidenced by its high share in total enrolment as well as its specific features, represents a particular strength in the Czech education system. In order to draw upon, and build on these strengths, to reinforce policies and reforms in the area of VOTEC, and to monitor ongoing initiatives at different levels of VOTEC, the review team recommends that a vice-minister in charge of VOTEC be appointed with responsibility for both initial and continuing secondary, and post-secondary vocational and technical education. The vice-minister would be the official ministry representative in the National Agency for VOTEC Curriculum, Standards and Certification proposed above.

Second, in order to strengthen the relevance of VOTEC to employment, *it is recommended to establish a regional level in educational administration through which VOTEC policies and reforms could be co-ordinated with employment policies.*

In view of uncertain employment developments and in the absence of clear signals from the labour market, it is important to develop means for reliable and efficient communication between schools and the labour market at the regional level. It is at this level that co-operation between schools and enterprises can be organised most effectively and that appropriate linkages between education, labour market and employment policies

can be implemented. The objective is to develop VOTEC networks – leading on to employment networks – at the regional level, involving schools and other training institutions, labour market offices, chambers, local administrations, companies, etc. This recommendation could be implemented in connection with Recommendation No. 8.

The review team noted the wide-ranging discussion on this recommendation, in particular several areas of concern to be addressed either through the proposed National Agency or the appointment of a new Vice-Minister for VOTEC, or through other means. *Czech officials from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Economy observed that any effort to widen the reach of curriculum reform in VOTEC implied other changes (e.g. in teacher preparation, upgrading and qualifications) and brought to light the need to take into account the entire range of VOTEC provision, for both adults and youths.* In this regard, delegates from the Netherlands and Belgium (Flanders) observed that the position of higher professional schools needed to be strengthened. In these two countries, comparable institutions have been accorded higher education status (no provision has yet been made in Czech higher education law), while in other countries (*e.g.* Australia, or the short-cycle in Denmark), such institutions are located between secondary and higher education.

Further discussion centred on the appropriateness of the specific measures proposed by the review team. The delegate from Belgium (Flemish Community) observed that the establishment of a new VOTEC agency and VOTEC Vice-Minister on the one hand, and a National Curriculum Council concerned with general education (Recommendation No. 5) on the other, would create a risk of fragmentation at a time when the Czech Republic, like other OECD countries, is seeking to promote a greater blending, integration, coherence and transparency between the vocational and general sectors of education. The review team acknowledged the risk, and noted that the benefits of the proposed approach would need to be weighed against possible costs in terms of weakened integration in all curricula. *For their part, Czech officials welcomed the recommendation not as a proposal for a "new bureaucracy", but rather as a step toward developing means to bring together a range of VOTEC interests and partners, with the aim of promoting system-wide improvement and greater co-ordination in VOTEC provision.*

Recommendation No. 7: Creating a tax incentive for companies investing in VOTEC (Chapter 1)

At their meeting of 16-17 January 1996, OECD Education Ministers agreed to develop strategies for lifelong learning. Such strategies embrace initial and continuing education, and include among their aims better coherence among three "sub-systems" of VOTEC, that for youths, adults and the unemployed.

In the Czech Republic, prior arrangements for continuing education collapsed, with the demise of former state enterprises and the uncertain future of others in the initial transition period. In this dynamic and uncertain environment, new forms of continuing education emerged to meet individual demands for education and training which would enhance career chances. Although useful and responsive, this development has failed to fully address the needs. On their own, Czech companies have not, to any great extent,

developed strategies to improve the qualifications of their work forces. With the possible exception of some foreign-owned companies, few enterprises are seeking or providing support for continuing education for their employees. For many firms, the first priority has often been survival. The involvement of employers in the design, delivery and (or) financing of initial VOTEC, as well as in continuing education, has been lacking and this is a matter of some concern.

The review team believes that such limited involvement on the part of enterprises weakens the capacity of continuing education to respond to the needs of changing employment and socio-economic structures and circumstances. The Czech economy should be supported in the transition by pro-active human resources development policies in general, and more specifically by continuing education programmes which are responsive to market forces. However, market forces have yet to fully reflect future needs, particularly given indications that further painful adjustments, with significant redeployment in the labour force, have yet to be made.

It is, therefore, recommended that a significant tax incentive for companies which invest in both initial and continuing VOTEC be introduced. The proposed measure might take the form either of a new levy or exemption payroll tax, or of an allowance on the existing payroll contribution to finance active employment policies.

In the examiners' opinion, preferential tax treatment for companies which contribute actively to initial VOTEC and (or) to the continuing education and training of their own employees would have three effects: firstly, it would mobilise additional resources for VOTEC, thus facilitating the continuing redeployment of the work force; secondly, it would raise awareness about VOTEC among employers and promote their involvement in the design of qualifications and standards in state-provided VOTEC, thus increasing its relevance; thirdly, it would strengthen the involvement and role of companies in steering and designing continuing education, with positive, long-term effects on the quality, level and relevance of initial VOTEC as well.

The proposed tax incentive might be developed as the operating tool of a *Declaration of Intention* by the government on lifelong learning. A statement directed at all interested parties – ministries, local governments, training institutions, associations, companies, etc. – would, if backed by such a concrete operational policy instrument, advance the implementation of lifelong learning in the Czech Republic.

While finding this recommendation of interest, Czech Ministry of Education officials believed that such a training levy or tax abatement was not likely to be taken up in the near term. Other country delegates cautioned that the experience with such an approach has been mixed. In Australia, for example, it was reported that the funds generated little additional training volume; they were applied to cover expenses for training that would otherwise have been provided. The review team, while accepting the possibilities for such a weak response, stressed that the proposed tax measure had a more important aim, namely to encourage greater interest and participation on the part of enterprises in continuing education and training. For this purpose, a range of measures could be used, such as "valuing" or "recognising" employer-provided training on a qualifications framework.

Recommendation No. 8: Establishing an intermediate (regional) level of school administration (Chapter 6)

Discussions about the new relationships between the schools as autonomous units and the Ministry of Education and its affiliated bodies tend to overshadow the potential role and missions of an intermediate (regional) level of school administration. At present, basic schools are run by a network of 85 district Schools Offices directly responsible to the ministry. These offices perform important administrative tasks, such as the appointment of school directors and the allocation of budgetary resources to each school on the basis of a flat-rate formula depending on the number of pupils. Secondary schools operate in a largely autonomous way, reporting directly to the ministry, which appoints their directors and allocates resources to them.

The review team believes that the present arrangements are inadequate, and do not permit an effective use of financial and human resources, or the promotion of modern techniques of education management. At the level of basic education, the geographical coverage of School Offices is too narrow to address over-capacity in an effective way. Decisions about school mergers and closures require a broader reach, embracing overall provision and facilities on a regional basis. School Offices also lack the political legitimacy to negotiate strategies to rationalise school provision on an equal footing with elected bodies such as municipalities. At the secondary level, government expects autonomous schools to be able, on their own, to rationalise provision according to student demand. However, schools faced with a declining demand tend to strive to maintain a *status quo*, while others will enjoy the benefit of higher prestige and selectivity without necessarily expanding capacity.

In the light of these considerations, the review team *recommends that regional education authorities be established with a broad and explicit mandate regarding education administration and governance at the primary and secondary levels.* Quite aside from the policy role of transmitting ministry policy initiatives to schools and reporting to the ministry on initiatives taken by schools, the mandate of these regional authorities would include, among others, the following tasks insufficiently addressed under the present system:

- rationalising school provision, which may often mean dealing with over-capacity. At the secondary education level, this would imply co-ordination of the various streams – general, technical and vocational – which are offered, so that students are provided with the best possible array of opportunities;
- co-operating with large municipalities in rationalising school provision and administering city-wide education systems;
- contributing to curriculum development and modernisation through exchange of information about best practice;
- participating actively in quality assessment in testing, examinations, etc.;
- providing an intermediate administrative level for effective co-ordination or co-operation between many support services to schools (evaluation), teachers (deployment and retraining), the ministry (data collection, policy feedback);
- co-operating with other bodies such as labour offices, enterprises, chambers, etc., especially with regard to VOTEC.

The above list is not intended to be exhaustive. It merely illustrates the types of tasks and functions which could be addressed effectively by a new, intermediate (regional) authority.

In their comments on this recommendation, Czech Ministry officials pointed out that political and practical considerations stood in the way of its implementation. The delegates from the United Kingdom observed that this recommendation had implications extending far beyond education administration and governance. These would require further attention, particularly in the light of the trend to minimise intermediate (regional) levels in public administration in many OECD countries, where the present focus is rather on schools operating within a national framework, while also drawing on support and advice from a range of partners and service providers. The delegate from Sweden noted the uncertain position of municipalities in a framework of regional administration. For their part, the reviewers pointed out that the recommendation would serve the need to extend "horizontal" democracy in education, and to do so through means and structures which could be most effective and efficient in serving the learning needs and interests of young people.

Recommendation No. 9: Strengthening monitoring and evaluation – the Inspectorate (Chapter 6)

Effective support and monitoring institutions are essential for the management of a decentralised education system. To function effectively, these institutions need clearly-defined objectives set down by the ministry, competent staff and flexible structures. Efficient linkages with the line management of education administration (the regional level, School Offices and the schools themselves) have to be worked out.

In this regard, the review team believes that the education system in the Czech Republic suffers from two serious deficiencies which have been mentioned in various chapters of the report. Firstly, support institutions are not properly linked with the Ministry of Education. Secondly, the capacity of support institutions to reach those at the school level with reasonable frequency is limited. In particular, while the Inspectorate has a strategy, it lacks the financial or institutional means to implement it. Other independent bodies carrying out the important tasks of information collection (statistical data) and research are staffed with competent people, but their relationship with the ministry seems to be imprecise.

At present, the Ministry of Education does not have clear strategies leading to manageable objectives and work programmes for the support and monitoring institutions; neither does it seem to draw on the expertise available in these institutions or to seek specific, strategic ways to apply that expertise in support of line management at the local or school levels. Support institutions tend to develop their own autonomous work programmes, independent of the ministry.

Four of the recommendations propose to create, upgrade or modify the work of support institutions: one in the area of assessment of pupil achievements (Recommendation No. 1), two in the area of curriculum development (Recommendations No. 5 and 6), and one in the area of teacher in-service education and training (Recommenda-

tion No. 10). The review team *recommends, further, that the Inspectorate be entrusted with a dual responsibility, namely systemic evaluation and school evaluation.*

With regard to systemic evaluation, the Inspectorate should be properly equipped to carry out periodic, in-depth analyses of parts of the education system, as requested by the Ministry of Education. These analyses should be seen as strengthening key policy decisions. The nature of Inspectorate's work in the evaluation of schools derives from the need, in a decentralised system with autonomous schools, to track school performance and functioning as a key element in the system.

In discussions at the review meeting, Czech Ministry officials expressed their agreement with this recommendation, but noted that the Inspectorate was only one of a range of support services. Delegates from Belgium (Flemish Community) and the United Kingdom emphasised the need to consider together the full range of support services, particularly when it is recognised that the aim of the work of the Inspectorate, as shared with other support services, is to promote improvement in schooling – an observation with which the review team agreed. In this regard, the links between the Inspectorate and other support services were seen as key elements of any strategy to be adopted in the Czech Republic. Evidencing some agreement with assigning a specific evaluation and monitoring role for the Inspectorate, delegates from France and the Netherlands observed that it has proved problematic to bring together within their Inspectorate both evaluation and support functions.

Recommendation No. 10: Linking in-service teacher training to school development and strengthened careers in teaching (Chapter 5)

Czech teachers have levels of initial preparation which compare well with other OECD countries. A four-year *Magister* course at university faculties of education is required for teaching in basic education, while secondary school teachers of general subjects obtain their qualification through five-year *Magister* studies, usually taken in specialist faculties. Pedagogical preparation, for most aspiring secondary teachers, takes place in tandem with the study of disciplines.

This investment in teacher quality, however, is not sufficient to ensure that teachers have the capacities, motivations and dispositions to meet the challenges of adapting schooling to the needs of a society and economy in transition. Teacher salaries although recently improved, are low, both initially and, more particularly, at later stages in teaching careers. The relatively low salaries make it difficult to attract the most able into teaching. For those who do enter teaching, the relatively flat salary profile makes teaching less attractive in mid-career – particularly in relation to opportunities available in the growing private sector where those trained as teachers are seen as highly desirable recruitment prospects. It should not be surprising that motivation and dispositions towards undertaking new and difficult reforms in curriculum, teaching practices and the sharing of responsibilities within and outside of schools are weakened in such circumstances.

As important as an adequate, rewarding salary is in attracting and retaining highly qualified teachers and in strengthening their motivation in the school and classroom, the

reviewers believe that salary improvements by themselves will be insufficient to reinforce needed quality in the teaching force. In this respect, they agree with the direction taken in the recent report of the consultative group on the minister's programme, *The Teacher*, which proposes career development in teaching with opportunities for professional progression and pay differentiation. The proposals, now under discussion, include recommendations for specific, transparent procedures to evaluate the quality of teaching and the extent of teacher involvement in school activities outside of teaching (in such functions as school management, curriculum development, mentoring and other in-service activities and counselling), implying a larger professional role for teachers.

Taking these considerations into account, a key cross-cutting step to reinforce quality in the teaching force is the reform of in-service education and training for teachers. The review team believes that such reforms should be given priority, for several reasons: in the face of changes in schools (diversity of needs and interests, autonomy) and in the economy and society, there are immediate requalification needs to be met; a reformed, diverse provision which is seen by teachers as relevant, of immediate value and conveying a sense of wider professional responsibilities can itself improve the attractiveness of teaching for those in mid-career; furthermore, the reforms in in-service education and training can lead and anticipate the implementation of new career profiles and differentiated pay. Therefore, *the reviewers recommend that in-service education and training should be clearly linked to the exercise of increased responsibilities throughout a teacher's career and also to differentiation in responsibilities, with associated progression and differentiation in pay.*

Two specific suggestions are made in this regard. Firstly, while the reviewers support the move to give schools and school directors more control over decisions on the level and composition of in-service education and training, they believe that such decisions need to be taken within the framework of a plan for schools, including priority goals and a larger professional role for teachers. Secondly, the eight regional centres with responsibilities for in-service teacher training should focus on diagnostic and advisory services and co-ordination, rather than solely on provision.

Reforms of in-service education and training along the lines described should be viewed as part of a more general effort to improve the image of teachers and to attract young graduates into the teaching profession. The reviewers strongly support such recruitment, even at a time when, owing to demographic developments, the overall size of the teaching force appears to be greater than the requirements. Concerns on the part of teachers or their representatives about the wider use of differentiated pay, the role of school directors as well as that of the ministry in deciding on priorities and the criteria to be used in evaluating performance for new career ranks could, in their opinion, be addressed within the overall framework for in-service education and training. Such proposals, in any event, are based on the assumption that all teachers receive an adequate, rewarding salary as just and fair compensation for the larger professional role they will be expected to play in providing high quality education.

Czech ministry officials agreed with the main recommendation to link careers, pay and training for teachers. They pointed out, however, that relative pay is not as low as indicated by the review team, perhaps reducing what is recognised as a potential

problem with "brain drain" from the teaching service. There was also concern about how far Czech teachers could be redeployed, owing to a rigidity in qualifications requirements and employment arrangements. In response to this last observation, the review team pointed out the use of qualifications covering wider age groups in the Netherlands, Sweden and Finland as examples of how other OECD countries have introduced greater flexibility. *With regard to in-service education and training, Czech ministry officials expressed concern about uneven take-up by teachers and therefore an interest in an approach which will use "methodological specialists" (teacher trainers) in the eight pedagogical centres to deliver training in the schools.* Delegates from other countries reported initiatives to define more carefully the work of teachers, *e.g.* "job descriptions" in Belgium (Flemish Community) and competencies for teaching in the United Kingdom, which can then be used to elaborate education and training requirements or identify particular training needs. The United Kingdom delegate stressed the need to have a strategy for teacher education in which the overall directions are set, the priorities are clear, and schools are supported in their implementation of training.

Recommendation No. 11: Establishing School Councils to strengthen school-community relationships (Chapter 6)

The strong position of school directors, appointed by the Ministry of Education or by the district School Offices dependent on the ministry, is a specific feature of the Czech education system. On the whole, the influence of school directors is believed to have positive effects on school management and staff performance.

Such an approach to management, however, has not fostered strong relationships between schools and their communities. These relationships can be strengthened through the establishment and operation of School Councils, comprised of representatives of the school founder, the teaching staff, parents and other community representatives. A 1995 amendment to the education law made it possible to establish such councils which, in addition to strengthening relationships between schools and the community, can also encourage the development of a more collegial approach to management within the school and, at the same time, promote "horizontal" democracy, shared governance, and through the public reporting to councils of school activities, introduce limited local accountability.

The review team *recommends that School Councils become compulsory in all schools*, not so much to balance the power of school directors as to encourage communication with, and involvement of, parents and the wider community. The mission of the councils should be of a consultative nature, but their operational procedure should be standardised. The review team is aware that it is difficult to secure active and effective participation on School Councils from parents, local partners, and employer representatives. It is also recognised that School Councils cannot rapidly assume all of the responsibilities identified. Nevertheless, such an arrangement represents one important means to both open up schools and to strengthen democratic tendencies already present within schools and communities.

Czech ministry officials expressed support for the strong role of School Councils (as envisaged in the 1995 legislation), but stressed the difficulty with requiring all schools to establish such councils in the near term. Based on experiences in their countries, other delegates viewed School Councils as important means for opening up schools. The Swiss delegate cautioned against too high expectations: seen from a system-wide perspective, School Councils have had varied, if generally positive, effects.

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Reviews of National Policies for Education

CZECH REPUBLIC

The Czech Republic has been remarkably successful, in many respects, during the initial stages of its transition to a democratic, advanced market-economy country. As the transition proceeds in this new OECD Member country, education and training will be expected to assume central roles in meeting the needs of the economy and society as well as the interests and aspirations of all young people and adults. The challenge for Czech education policy is to promote and support changes which embody such a broad and responsive approach to human resource development.

This report analyses the difficulties encountered thus far in the transformation of education in the Czech Republic and identifies changes in policies and structures which could stimulate further reform in the needed directions. Particular attention is given to quality and equity in education, priorities in the development of vocational and technical education, a revitalised role for teachers, and new structures for improved efficiency and strengthened democracy in schools and schooling.

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